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ACES

A COLLECTION OF SHORT STORIES

BY

DOROTHY CANFIELD FISHER
OCTAVIUS ROY COHEN
EDNA FERBER
F. SCOTT FITZGERALD
ZONA GALE
BRUNO LESSING
KATHLEEN NORRIS
MARY ROBERTS RINEHART
BENJAMIN R. SHER
G. B. STERN
THYRA SAMTER WINSLOW
ISRAEL ZANGWILL

COMPILED BY

THE COMMUNITY WORKERS

OF THE

NEW YORK GUILD FOR THE JEWISH BLIND

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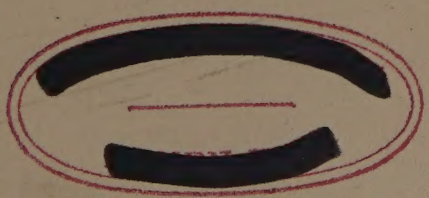

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THE COMMUNITY WORKERS

OF THE

NEW YORK GUILD FOR THE JEWISH BLIND

GRATEFULLY DEDICATE THIS VOLUME

TO

THE AUTHORS

WHOSE GENEROSITY HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE

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ACES

DOROTHY CANFIELD

WHAT *REALLY* HAPPENED

The other day a nerve-specialist, a rather sad, stern, disillusioned old man, was visiting my home, and he chanced to speak to me of the little boy. He said: "The child is eight years old now. His mother brought him to me the other day for treatment for some obscure nervous trouble that borders on St. Vitus's dance. And he has some morbid desires, too, that are increasingly hard to control. And he has the nightmare nearly every night. His mother said she couldn't understand what was the matter with him. All his ancestors had had such good constitutions. And she'd always taken such good care of him. His digestion was perfect. She said she'd simply given up her life to do the right thing for the child. She said she thought it must be due to the exciting conditions of modern life, that are so hard on children." "Could you do anything for him?" I asked. "Not unless I could unlive his life for him and get him a new mother to begin again with—or shoot him in the head," was the specialist's reply.

Once upon a time there was a little boy. He was born with all sorts of advantages, among which were a number of very desirable forebears, from whom he inherited a good brain, an excellently strong body, and a very delicately and accurately adjusted set of nerves. At first, when he was a little, little baby, there was, of course, as with all little babies just HIMSELF, and nothing else

of any importance. But by the time he was three years old there was Himself and the World; largely Himself, of course, with the world for a treasure-house from which he incessantly fished out new impressions and sensations for his lively, strong, intelligence to arrange in order. He found this the most fascinating occupation possible—as indeed it is.

Also he found that by watching grownups, he could widen his ideas immensely on things to do. Grownups were always doing something different. He watched all the members of his family, and immediately tried to copy their actions. This was considered extremely entertaining. When he put a spoon in his cup of milk and stirred with exactly the gesture his father used in stirring sugar into coffee, his mother cried out, "Oh, isn't he the most adorable little monkey?" and kissed him a great many times. And when he stuck his curly hair full of his mother's hairpins, she led him all around the house to show him to his aunt and his father, and even to the cook, so they could laugh with her over his funny little notions. Although he had no idea what was amusing, he laughed, too, with all his little face, because he could no more help imitating the cheerful laughing expressions about him than he could help copying everything else he saw.

He had been three years old for a few weeks when, one morning, his mother said to his father that they really must have the guest-room repapered and done over. His father said nothing, being engaged in reading the newspaper, but as his mother had not intended that his father should say anything, she was not surprised or disappointed. She went on: "I've chosen a rather expensive bordered kind of paper, because I can get some perfectly fascinating imported French cretonne to match—the kind that has those adorable little wreaths that you cut out and

appliqué on white. I thought I'd do the whole room over fresh. Bella Parsons is coming to visit me next month, and since she married into that wealthy Parsons family, she's terribly critical."

The little boy was playing with a woolly lamb on wheels and wasn't paying any attention, because he thought what his mother was saying wasn't worth listening to. And he was quite right.

Although his father still didn't say anything, you could tell by the expression of his face that he had listened. He got up from the table, put on his overcoat, and went away. What he said was: "Good-by, dear. Good-by, Buster-boy," as he kissed them both. What he thought was that he guessed he'd better be getting along to business to make the money to pay for the wall-paper and the cretonne to match which were to impress his wife's old acquaintance.

So it was that after a while two strange men came to the house with a step-ladder, and a long board, and a big pail, and rolls of paper, and a little roller-thing, and ever so many such fascinating objects, and papered the guest-room all afresh. The little boy didn't like strangers very well, and he felt rather shy of these overalled men whose faces didn't look at all like those of his much-educated family. But the men were so interesting he couldn't keep away from them. He loitered around the door to the guest-room and looked shyly in; and when he found that the men were too busy to grin at him, or chuck him under the chin, or ask him what his name was—when they knew already—or poke him in the ribs, the way most of the much-educated callers did, he stood boldly in the doorway, with his chubby legs wide apart, and watched them, his eyes shining like stars with interest.

The joy of this adventure so emboldened him that

when two strange sewing-women came to the house, after a brief preliminary survey of them from a distance, he took his little stool to the guest-room and sat down to watch them as they worked. They paid as little attention to him as the overalled men had done, and they were even more interesting. In fact, he had never seen any grownups amuse themselves so sensibly. Why, anybody would like to do what they did! They had beautiful shining scissors, which flashed in the light, and hour after hour they played with the scissors; they cut and snipped and slashed away at the crisp cretonne. They never seemed to grow tired of it, for as soon as they had cut up into little bits all they had in their laps, they reached down to the big pile of the stuff, pulled up a fresh supply, and began again, while their scissor-blades made the most delightful, thin, whispery sound as they sheared through the fabric. The little boy's strong eager fingers fairly itched to do it, too; but they were quite strange women, and he felt too shy to ask them to lend him their scissors.

At noon the women opened lunch-boxes and began to eat their lunches, while the little boy was taken downstairs to eat a carefully balanced meal which gave him exactly the food-elements he needed. His mother was very careful about his food, and was bringing him up according to the rules of an excellent book on child-feeding. His grandmother said it was all nonsense, but it really was a great success. The little boy had never had a single stomachache in all his life, and—although she wouldn't admit it—this was something before-unheard-of for his grandmother. In her day they thought children had stomachache just as inevitably as they had hair or finger-nails.

His mother was rather silent and abstracted during

this luncheon. She was figuring up on the back of an envelope the costs of the numerous yards of imported French cretonne, and adding to it the considerable expense of having the two sewing-women cut it all up and then sew it together again. Although she persistently recalled to mind that nothing was more chic than to have wreaths of French cretonne appliquéd on curtains and bed-spreads, and chair-covers and bureau covers, the sum-total of her calculations made her frown and forget to enjoy her luncheon. She also almost forgot the little boy, although with a few cells of her brain, she automatically told him to chew his food fine and not to take large mouthfuls. She was very careful about his eating and anxious to lay the foundations of future health for him.

After luncheon the little boy had to have his nap; and after his nap a young lady working her way through college came and took him for a walk. His mother followed closely the excellent advice of her book on the care of children, and always provided for a daily outdoor walk for her little son. Also the arrangement left her own afternoon free.

So it happened that he did not go back to the guest-room until the next morning, and then things had changed. The two women were sewing now as fast as they could. They were sewing upon white cloth the little snips and pieces of the cretonne they had cut up. There was a certain pleasant monotony about the way their needles flashed in and out, but nothing to compare with the delicious sight and sound of their scissors in the cloth.

After a while he saw the scissors lying on a chair and very shyly put out his hand to them. The older woman glanced at him, guessed that probably he wouldn't run

the points into his eye if he sat still, and said that it wasn't her business if he did. She made no objection when he picked up some scraps of the cretonne from the floor.

The little boy did not care what she might think and did not pay any attention whatsoever to her. A divine delirium descended upon him, the exquisite experience of a new sense-satisfaction. The scissor-blades were very sharp, the cretonne was very crisp, and the combination was to a little boy of three what a perfectly performed Wagnerian opera is to a musician—a joyous riot of sensuous delight. He was a clever little boy, and he very soon mastered the necessary motions, although he had never been allowed to hold scissors before. His thumb and forefinger opened and shut, opened and shut till his hand ached. But he did not know that it ached, because he was so entranced with the resultant sensations. To see the cloth fall apart into two halves before the onslaught of his blades, to see the clear, sharp line of cleavage where an instant before there had been none, to feel the threads of the firmly-woven fabric give way as he contracted his muscles—no yachtsman on a day of brisk wind and blowing spume ever braced himself to more tingling, tantalizing pleasure!

After a time the older woman looked down at him as he worked, chewing his tongue, breathing hard, his head on one side. As she saw his shining eyes and brilliant cheeks, she laughed and said: "My! don't they get a lot of comfort out of their little fool tricks? Ain't it funny how crazy kids are about cutting with scissors? When they get about so old, every last one of them has to have the cutting-out fever."

Then came the not-to-be-avoided sequence of luncheon, nap, and walk. The walk was longer than usual. It was

late when the little boy came in, and he was very hungry and tired, but he started at once upstairs to the guest-room to find the strange women and their scissors. He tried to run up, but his legs felt so heavy that he had to toil along, one step at a time. But his grandfathers had handed on to him plenty of grit and perseverance, and he never thought of giving up to his fatigue baby fashion, not even when his mother, coming down-stairs as he went up, offered to carry him down and hold him in her lap. He shook his head and plodded on, set upon accomplishing without any assistance what he had begun.

It was getting a little dark in the guest-room, and the little boy didn't like shadowy corners very well, but he wasn't a " 'fraid-cat," and he went boldly in while he mastered his fear, as one of his grandfathers had gone forward on a battlefield in the Civil War.

But nobody was in the guest-room. The strange women had gone! The little boy was bitterly disappointed, and drew down the corners of his mouth. But just then he saw the scissors, bright in the dusk, still lying on the chair and as his eyes grew used to the twilight, he could see across the bed great quantities of the stuff the women had been sewing. It was all right, after all. Everything was there ready for work. It was very good of the women to leave everything so handy for him to go on with their undertaking. With the scissors in his hand, he climbed up on the bed, and gathering into his little lap an armful of the material, he set to work manfully.

Of course he couldn't do it as fast as the women had, but it really went very well, he thought, breathing hard, and cutting and slashing. The material the women had sewed their pieces upon was thinner than the cretonne,

and having it in such big sections made cutting easier for him. None of the length of the big scissors was wasted on air, as when he had cut the scraps, but every inch of them counted as the blades buried themselves to the nose. When he cut through a part where some cretonne had been sewed on, it was harder, and he had to grip the handles hard—and then, all of a sudden, clip! He would be through, and tearing out over a big section of the white. It was glorious!

Steps came down the hall, but he did not hear them, happy and absorbed as he was. He was really very tired by this time, but he would not give up. He chewed his tongue as he worked, and his eyes were like stars, they shone so brilliantly.

His mother came to the doorway and seeing him there in the dusk, said, "What are you doing here, darling?" But he did not hear her. He had just mastered the technique of making a really long slash with the scissors, quite as the women had. For an instant his mother strained her eyes to see what her little son was doing. Then she pressed a button, a prettily shaded lamp blossomed into light, and—she saw what he was doing. For just long enough for the little boy to turn about and see her face, she stood perfectly motionless.

She thought she was standing safe and sheltered in the guest-room of her pleasant tasteful house, but she was really standing under the great windy sky of eternity, facing two diverging roads, which went farther and farther apart as they stretched before her into infinity.

At the sight of his mother's eyes and mouth, the little boy's happy, tired, triumphant face was stricken into panic terror. What horrible unthinkable thing had happened to make her look so? He screamed and ran toward her for protection. Yes, toward her. He was only

three, you know, and he still felt his mother to be what saints feel God to be.

And this is what happened. In a loud angry voice, she said many loud angry things, to the effect that she had never heard of anything so naughty in all her life, that her little boy was the worst little boy in the world, and that she would make him remember to have more sense the next time. When, frightened into hysteria, he began screaming and struggling, she raised her voice, and she showed him, with a finger trembling with emotion, the great gaping cuts he had made in the cloth, but as that was just what the little boy had meant to make, he had not the slightest idea of what was the matter. And then, as he continued to scream, and she to talk louder and louder, she undressed him so that his tender flesh would be quite unprotected from her rage, and she beat him with her hands, with her strong, nervous, well-shaped, and carefully manicured hands.

Do you think that ever again her little son will run toward his mother as a saint runs toward his God?

That night, when the little boy's father came home, he asked, "Where's Buster?"

His mother said: "He's in bed. I couldn't let him stay up to dinner. He did the naughtiest thing today! I had to give him his first spanking. I hated to—and I didn't after the very first do more than just the lightest taps. But you just have to once in a while. They have to be taught to use their sense."

Her husband inquired, "What'd he do that was so fearfully bad?"

She felt the note of skepticism in his voice and resented it. "You know the new curtains for the guest-room?"

He nodded. He had thought more than once about

those curtains, and what they stood for. And when he heard what had happened, there was no note of skepticism in his voice as he groaned and said, "Oh, Heavens! Kids are the limit!" And he asked anxiously: "How much harm did he do? Will they have to be all done over?"

His wife said: "Well, I should think they would! He simply made mince-meat out of all they've done in the last two days—let alone all the cretonne spoiled!"

The little boy's father frowned and began doing mental arithmetic. His wife knew by the expression of his face what he was doing, and it made her nervous. She was plenty nervous enough already without that. In a moment she said in the dry tone that fitted the words, "You'd better go up and look at it yourself, if you don't think—"

Her husband answered rather somberly, "Oh, I take your word for it," as though he meant that he'd have to do what she said in the end, anyhow, no matter how much he went up and looked at it. Then he went on doing mental arithmetic, and showing it. For the moment they had both quite forgotten the little boy.

But later the little boy's father asked, apropos of nothing, looking up from the sporting page: "Do you suppose the little tike knew he was doing something bad? He's such a little shaver still."

His wife said decidedly: "Oh, if you'd seen the guilty look he had the minute he saw me. He positively turned pale to be caught at it. Of course he knew. A great big boy like that. Anybody'd have more sense than not to know." She said all this decidedly enough, but as the question brought back to her suddenly what had happened up in the guest-room, she looked a little sick.

What happened to the little boy? I don't think I'll

tell you in real language what happened to the little boy, because I don't think either you or I could stand it. But I'll set down some dry facts which bear on the question, and comment on the situation in safely sterilized pseudo-scientific terms, guaranteed to be insulated from any personal emotion.

When the little boy was born, although he was as fine a baby as ever lived, he was by no means a perfect specimen of humanity. Like all of his kind, he was born blind and deaf, and had very little sense of taste and not much sense of touch. He put in the first year of his life acquiring all these senses, and he made a fine job of it, thanks to his excellent constitution and the care his mother took of him.

But even then he was by no means completed. He had, as you will remember, a finely delicate set of nerves; but, of course, they were not as yet adequately linked up, either with each other or with the world, and now he was busy every waking moment on this new job of adjusting and settling his nervous system, ready for the long lifetime of hard, accurate service he expected from it. Everything was grist that came to that little mill; every sight, sound, sensation, impression—the little boy's brain took them all in, and began arranging them for future reference. Little by little his nerves began to get hooked up in the right order, and because he was a very normal child, they began to give him accurate information about what was outside him in the world.

All this information was stored away by the little boy's brain according to the law of association, that law which makes us hold a flower up to our noses, although we may never have seen that kind of flower before. It's the law which, after one experience with fire, makes us take hold of the lower end of a burning candle, and not

of the flame; it is the law by means of which we have from babyhood sorted out and set in order the vast numbers of sensations brought us by our nerves.

The little boy was in full swing of this process, and fairly breathless with his interest in it. Every single object in his world was becoming enriched with an ever-increasing cluster of associations. The cat was all thick with them, associations of softness, and purriness, and occasionally of scratchiness. When he looked at her now, all her qualities were present to his mind, and he no longer needed to feel of her to know that she was soft. He did not even need to see her. If he heard the word "cat," the little boy's nerves instantly presented him with a neat well-ordered group of all the things he knew about a cat. And so it was with everything. Soap meant a white wet smoothness and the "give" of it under a vigorous digging finger-nail; and scissors meant—but we'd better not say anything about what scissors meant to the little boy.

In fact, I find that it is very hard to bring myself to put down, even in the dryest words, what happened to the little boy at the moment when his investigation into the nature of things made him inconvenient to his mother's plans for impressing Bella Parsons. I think I will not try to tell you at all.

It is safer not to attempt to tell you for fear of using too strong language. It's best not to try to give you any idea of how the little boy screamed and screamed until he lost his mind as truly as any fear-crazed person in a burning theatre; nor how all the delicately adjusted mechanism of his little body was knocked temporarily all crooked, as the mechanism of a grown man's body is twisted by the emotion of being under fire on a battle-field for the first time; nor how later, as he lay in his

little bed, sobbing and crushed, his fear, his horror, his inability to understand, and his hatred, poured veritable poisons into his blood as though his mother had given him a dose of strychnin.

No, although all those, and many more, are plain well-established facts, we will not describe them, because there are plenty of unpleasant things in real life without reading about them in stories. And, anyhow, he was only a baby of three, who had destroyed what would cost at least eight sacred dollars to replace, and he had very properly been spanked for his mischief. It wasn't a hard spanking either. We have his mother's word for that.

Let us therefore look the other way from the bed where the little boy lies sleeping it off, with an occasional nervous tremor running over him; and let us observe the more cheerful phenomenon of his astonishing capacity for readjustment. For he was made of sturdy stuff, and he rose up the next morning, made over by his sleep, perhaps not quite as rosy as the day before, but quite as lively and alert as ever, and quite as hungry for his breakfast and for life. Externally, he looked exactly the same child, and if internally he had added to his old associations about cats, and stoves, and flowers, and pepper a whole new set of associations connected with his mother and a certain tone of voice and a certain look in her face, why, all this was quite invisible, did not induce a degree of fever which would have showed on the clinical thermometer; and so nobody was troubled about it.

"All this" became, however, troublesomely visible again, the day after Bella Parsons's visit began. Like most visits of this sort, it brought with it a considerable amount of nervous tension for the household, and the little boy's nerves recorded nervous tension as accurately

as a wireless apparatus records vibrations. In addition his nerves were quicker to feel nervous tension than ever before. He didn't like the visiting lady either, because he soon learned that she thought little boys a great nuisance and always likely to be in some mischief. It was very trying for his young mother, so anxious to have everything "go exactly right" in the presence of her critical acquaintance, when her little son, on the second morning of the visit, refused to go and shake hands with Mrs. Parsons. Although he could not have told why, the little boy refused because he felt that Mrs. Parsons wanted to shake his hand as little as he wanted to shake hers. But he did not know that he felt this impolite analysis of the situation. He only shook his head and backed away.

His mother did not, as you might think she would have done, thereupon consider the question of exactly how valuable it was for a three-year-old boy to shake the hand of a lady who considered him a nuisance. No, she stiffened all over her nervous young body, because she knew her visitor was looking at her with malicious eyes, and she said in a stern voice, with a vibration of anger in it like the shimmer of heat over a red-hot bar, "Come right here this minute, and do what I say." That was what had been said to her in her childhood, and the words flowed smoothly from her tongue.

Now, human bodies are so constituted that by far the most vivid impression the little boy got from this speech was from the heat of anger in the voice; and—again that is the way we are all put together—this came to him accompanied with a horrifyingly clear and burningly prompt association. That was the way his mother's voice had sounded in the guest-room. This recollection instantly tied his nerves up tight in aching ganglia again, so that all the quick pleasant give-and-take between them

and his intelligence was gone. They no longer told him accurately what was happening in the world. They only burned, and twitched, and snapped with the recollection brought to them by that tone in his mother's voice.

So it happened that he did not step forward and shake Mrs. Parsons's hand. He was now only dimly aware that there was any Mrs. Parsons in the world. He stood perfectly still, his face very deeply flushed, his jaw set hard, his hands and feet as cold as ice, and a sick dull look of anger in his eyes—his eyes which we have seen shining like stars. He was in the state of mind which, a couple of centuries ago, was called madness or insanity, which doctors nowadays call hysteria, which his mother called stubbornness.

But she did not call it stubbornness in herself as she stood there facing him, her own sensitive nerves jangling fiercely. No; although she was in precisely the same state of mind as her son, she called it firmness; nor did she perceive in it a considerable admixture of fear lest Bella Parsons report to her wealthy in-laws that her old friend "could not make her little boy mind."

If at this critical moment she had taken her little boy by the hand, led him quietly upstairs, given him a warm bath, several degrees hotter than usual, and laid him gently down on a bed in a silent darkened room, with plenty of fresh air, those terribly tense nerve-knots of his might have relaxed, and his blood might again have circulated freely so that his feet and hands would have lost their icy chill; and then, the next time the heat of anger shimmering ominously over her voice had brought back those brutal associations of violence and rage to pluck with tragic fingers at her little son's nerves, if she had taken him out to his sand pile and left him alone to

watch the clean white sand slide between his fingers till his heart had gone back to its normal pulse; and so and so and so for several months and years, why, perhaps, she might have gotten her little boy back to the state he would have been in if, upon entering the guest-room, she had sat down by him and by intelligent patient questioning had extracted from him and corrected his baby idea that if it was all right for strange women to sit cutting cloth into strips, it was all right for a little boy to do the same. Perhaps—let us hope so. Let us forget the hard law of nature, which never lets us undo any thing.

However, she did none of these things. Poor young mother! But the point is to tell you what she did do. She said to herself: "I must be firm now. It's now or never! It's for his own good!" and then, with one eye on Bella Parsons's wealthy in-laws, she put on his shoulder a nervously gripping hand which conveyed to his little mind ten thousand more quivering associations of violence and rage. And she pushed him forward, not very gently, and when he would not shake hands, being by this time practically blind with anger and fear and horror, she shook him; and finally she took him up stairs and—No, decidedly, I will not give you even an outline of what passed between this loving, well-educated, American mother and her son. Besides there was nothing unusual in it. Very likely her neighbor next door was doing the very same thing to her little son.

After a time, she came hastily out of the nursery—the nursery she had spent so much loving care upon—and locked the door behind her. Instantly there was a sound of furious kickings on the door and beatings with small clenched fists, and a strange, shrill, choked, suffocated voice which had never been heard in that house before

began shrieking out: "I hate you! I hate you! I wish I could kill you!" Yes, it was likely that the little boy next door was saying the same thing. Just the ordinary thing, you see, when little boys have to begin to learn to mind their mamas.

This mama went down-stairs to her visitor, rather flushed, but with a surface of calmness which reflected great credit on her powers of self-control. "You just have to be firm with them," she informed the childless Mrs. Parsons, with an air of mature experience. "If they ever once get ahead of you, there's no end of it." Then they went up-stairs to the guest-room and said how pretty it was, and remarked how much more chic appliquéd cretonne was than chintz, and agreed that the roses in the wreaths were "just too lovely!"

The other day a nerve-specialist, a rather sad, stern, disillusioned old man, was visiting my home, and he chanced to speak to me of the little boy. He said: "The child is eight years old now. His mother brought him to me the other day for treatment for some obscure nervous trouble that borders on St. Vitus's dance. And he has some morbid desires, too, that are increasingly hard to control. And he has the nightmare nearly every night. His mother said she couldn't understand what was the matter with him. All his ancestors had had such good constitutions. And she'd always taken such good care of him. She said she's simply given up her life to do the right thing for the child. She said she thought it must be due to the exciting conditions of modern life that are so hard on children."

"Could you do anything for him?" I asked.

"Not unless I could unlive his life for him and get him a new mother to begin again with—or shoot him in the head," said the doctor wearily. "Well, he'll be

a gold-mine for the psychoanalysts by the time he's forty, and has had nervous prostrations three or four times. They'll learn a lot out of him. They won't lay it to trolley-cars and the moving-picture shows, either!"

"Well, don't you think modern conditions are responsible for the prevalence of nervous disorders?" I asked. "Three generations ago he wouldn't have had any more understanding upbringing."

"No, but three generations ago his body wouldn't have had any intelligent care either, and nature would have had a chance to kill him kindly with a germ. Did you ever walk through an old churchyard and estimate the rate of child mortality? Typhoid, scarlet fever, diphtheria: they must have accounted for innumerable nervously under par children. Nowadays we take such precious good care of the bodies that sick souls can't escape—worse luck!" (You must not take the nerve specialist too literally. He is very tired and old, and weary with watching human folly.)

Something about this talk had given me a new idea, and I went to the Wise Man with whom I talk everything over. I told him the story and asked him what he thought of it. He said very impolitely, "I think that that cruel and vulgar woman thought more of her curtains than of finding out what was in her little boy's mind." When the Wise Man is stirred, he often shows it by being cross. I looked to see if his eyes were sad. And they were! The Wise Man loves little children.

I said: "I don't believe she was vulgar and cruel. I don't believe she cared more for her curtains than for her little son. I think she hadn't the slightest idea what she was doing. I think she was only a poor little girl herself, all confused with her silly desire to show off to a woman she didn't esteem. I think she was a little

girl who had had put on her a responsibility for which she wasn't prepared. And she paid a tragic price for her mistake."

The Wise Man's eyes were sadder than ever when I finished. He nodded his head as though he saw what I meant. And after he had smoked for a moment in silence, he said: "You'd better write that into a story. It may be in time to save the little boy of some other little-girl mother."

Dorothy Canfield

OCTAVUS ROY COHEN

BASS INGRATITUDE [1]

THINGS were never quite so bad with Willie Dime as to be incapable of getting worse, and he figured later that he should have suspected trouble when the rotund figure of Kismet Brown appeared out of the storm. Of course, the fact that Kismet was sponsored by the genial and immaculate Florian Slappey served to allay such suspicions as might ordinarily have warned Mr. Dime; but, as Willie afterwards reflected bitterly, an exercising of merely ordinary powers of perception would have informed him that Kismet was a bass singer.

In the first place, Kismet Brown looked like a bass singer. He was large of feature and ample of girth; he affected gray pants and a Prince Albert coat and a flowing necktie. But it was his voice that should have carried the message—a deep, rumbling, reverberant voice that boomed through the odorous confines of the little barbecue stand and vied with the compelling tones of the thunder which even at the moment of his advent was stirring all Birmingham.

One hour previously the storm had struck the city; a jagged flash of lightning, a crash of thunder and a swishing downpour of rain. Now the streets glistened blackly under corner arcs and the gutters were raging torrents of uncompromising wetness. Traffic proceeded

[1] Copyright, 1924, by Octavus Roy Cohen.

skiddily and profanely; a few unfortunate pedestrians fought against the storm with heads bowed and shoulders hunched; the power house was flooded and lights went out over the city, leaving street cars standing dark and disconsolate.

When the storm broke, Mr. Dime gave vent to his disappointment in a single pessimistic comment—"I might of knowed that was it gwine storm thisaway it would pick Saddy night to do it on."

It was, indeed, unfortunate from a business standpoint, for Willie Dime's barbecue stand was justly famous for the quality of its sandwiches, and on Saturday night it usually did a land-office business with automobile parties bound joyward on the various paved roads which criss-cross Jefferson County. For tonight, however, Willie knew that he must content himself with discontent. Barbecued pork and barbecued beef sizzled mournfully, their appetizing odors keening Willie's misery rather than his appetite. On the little iron stove simmered the Brunswick stew, and from under a glass-topped case myriad neat slices of bread gazed reproachfully upon the weather that made their sale impossible.

It was, in every sense of the word, a wet night for Mr. Dime, and it came at a time when Willie craved cash money and plenty of it. Not that business was bad at the Avenue F Barbecue Palace—far from it; but it was not so good as Willie wished it to be, and recently Mr. Dime had learned that he must build up his business swiftly if he was to avoid dire trouble with a certain Mr. Semore Mashby, an attenuated and wealthy colored gentleman more noted for his ability to make dollars multiply than for his humaneness.

When the door opened and a gust of wind and rain accompanied Florian Slappey and Kismet Brown into the

Palace, Willie's countenance betrayed a fifty-fifty mixture of welcome and disappointment; the former caused by the sight of Mr. Slappey, and the latter because he understood that whatever eating of barbecue sandwiches was to be done in the very immediate future would be at the expense of the business.

The visitors blew loudly upon their gelid hands, floridly anathematised the Saturday-night weather and commented that the odor of the place suttinly did impaht a passionate appetite.

"And," wound up Mr. Slappey, "I craves to 'traduce to you my friend Mistuh Brown."

No hint of bitterness and enmity to come was in the gaze of either man as they clasped hands. Mr. Brown was too vast and entirely too impressive to cause Mr. Dime any immediate forebodings; and Mr. Brown had only feelings of warm friendship for the gentleman who owned the meat from which emanated the appetizing odor with which the shop was filled.

Kismet Brown was hungry. Also, he was broke, and he was a stranger in a strange land. Mr. Slappey being unduly impressed by Kismet's protuberant personality, neglected to mention to Willie that his friendship with the large gentleman had been inaugurated less than an hour previously. Probably Florian had a hunch that much prestige was to be gained by claiming a long intimacy with the stranger; certainly Kismet was no person to be gazed upon and forgotten.

Willie Dime, on the other hand, wasn't much in the matter of physique or pulchritude; he was short and wizened and most ingenuously unhandsome. But Kismet surveyed the little man with vast respect as Florian Slappey informed him that this was the person of whom he was talking.

"Talkin' 'bout me?" queried Willie.

"Tha's the on'y thing us wasn't doin' nothin' else but." averred Kismet enthusiastically. "Brother Slappey was transcribin' to me what a swell feller you is."

"Yas-suh, Willie, I shuah was. Which is how come us to leave away fum Bud Peaglar's place an' come down heah where folks c'n git barbecue as is barbecue."

Instinct informed Willie that he was being hinted at, but as yet he showed no indication of response.

"I does pufform a pretty nice barbecue," he admitted impersonally; "but that don't make me no good on a night like this." He turned to Mr. Brown. "On a clear Saddy night this time of yeah I has cars parked in front of my place till pas' midnight. Mostly white folks too."

"Ain't it the truth?" Kismet, it appeared, was in a unanimous mood. "You suttinly must have a swell business heah."

"More'n I c'n handle alone," confessed Willie. "Saddy nights an' Sundays I gits plumb tuckered out."

Mr. Slappey insinuated himself into the conversation.

"That's what I was tellin' Mistuh Brown, Willie, when us was discussin' you. I kind of suggested to him that mebbe if he was willin' to assept a good job, you might have a place fo' an espert sandwich man."

Willie's faintly outlined eyebrows arched in surprise.

"Him? Wants a job?"

"Uh-huh."

"I'se willin'," interjected the pompous Kismet. "I aims to wuk fo' what I gits. An' if you needs an espert barbecue man——"

Willie Dime eyed his caller with freshened interest. For some months he had entertained the idea of hiring a man; he felt that it would be a money-making proposi-

tion, as nowadays he often lost trade by reason of his inability to cope with the crowds during rush hours. This idea had been vague and nebulous in his mind; ideas did not crystallize quickly in the Dime brain, and more than once he had discussed the matter with Florian.

"You ain't been in Bumminham long, has you, Mistah Brown"

"Not so ve'y."

"Where you come fum?"

"Anniston."

"An' you understan's barbecue?"

"You said it."

Willie was not a bad business man. He negotiated a very satisfactory deal with Mr. Brown. That gentleman was to receive a salary of seven dollars a week, sleeping quarters in the rear of the shop and all the barbecue he could eat. Immediately as the deal was closed Kismet commenced collecting one portion of his salary.

Willie watched in pop-eyed horror.

"Goodness goshness Miss Agnes Kismet, you suttinly do inhale them barbecue!"

Kismet, too busy for words, nodded. This was the first foursquare meal that had come to him in nearly a week and he was not one to ignore golden opportunity.

Sunday dawned bright and clear—and warm. That afternoon the Avenue F Barbecue Palace did a sizable business and at night there was a grand rush of curb patronage; mostly white folks bound for an evening of automobiling in the country.

Whatever might be said for or against Kismet Brown, his worst enemy could not accuse him of being other than an expert sandwich man. He handled a bread knife with neatness and precision and knew to the thickness of a gnat's eyelash how much pork or beef to insert in a bar-

becue sandwich. Too, he supervised the work of the portly female cook who prepared the eatments which Willie Dime dispensed—and found opportunity for valid criticism that resulted in immediate improvement.

Willie was well satisfied, and during the first week of Kismet's employment the proprietor of the barbecue stand devoted a large percentage of his time to the practice of bass singing.

There, after all was said and done, was the location of Willie's heart; he was a passionate and enthusiastic bass singer—and a successful one. As the lowest-voiced member of the Heavenly Harmony Sweet Singers he found opportunity to release a trifling bit of the artistic temperament housed in his skinny little frame, and, too, he collected considerable cash at the same time.

The Heavenly Harmony Sweet Singers were a vogue in Birmingham. A prominent south-side society matron had screened them behind palms at an exclusive reception and their melody made a success of the affair. Thereafter they were sought socially, their soft voices, blending exquisitely and harmoniously, causing a near-riot among those who desired something a little different at social functions. Too, the mania spread to various prosperous clubs of the city, and night after night the Sweet Singers were booked to entertain club members.

Nor was their remuneration too modest. The steady demand for their services had caused the price to soar and on occasion they received as much as twenty dollars an evening—five dollars apiece. Quintus Weefalls, first tenor and leader of the quartet, was a vocalizer of parts and he saw to it that prosperity did not cause any flagging in the quality of the quartet's work. Quintus knew a good thing when it shook hands with him, and he proved a stern and unrelenting leader. That his policy was cor-

rect was proved by the failure of several rival quartets which futilely flung vocal banners to the breeze.

Ten days after the installation of Kismet Brown as first assistant to Willie Dime in the barbecue business, the portly gentleman requested permission to attend a rehearsal of the Heavenly Harmony Sweet Singers. Business was dull and the weather none too prepossessing, so Willie consented. It was difficult for Mr. Dime to refuse an audience which was certain to prove appreciative. And so at nine o'clock they locked the door of the shop and proceeded down Eighteenth Street toward the lodge rooms of The Sons & Daughters of I Will Arise, where rehearsals were held thrice weekly. En route to the hall Mr. Brown exhibited an inordinate degree of interest in the money-getting capacities of the Sweet Singers.

"Bet it's a swell quartet," he suggested.

"Boy, that suttinly is truth which you speaks with yo' mouf! Us is the sweetest singers you ever did heah."

"An' you is the bass soloist?"

"Well," admitted Willie honestly, "I sings bass, but on'y sometimes does I solo."

"White folks hiahs you-all, don't they?"

"Mos' usually."

"An' does they pay you good?"

"You said it. Th'ee nights ago us sang over on Cliff Road at a big reception an' they give us twenty dollars. Lots of times we gits that much, an' always we gits at least ten."

Kismet blinked eagerly.

"How much you reckon you makes a week offen that bass singin'?"

Willie did a little mental arithmetic.

"Reckon I ave'ges 'bout fifteen dollars a week. Tha's how come I to hiah you down to the stan'. I pays you

seven dollars an' gits a heap of time off fo' my bass singin', which leaves me a clear profit of eight dollars on you."

A pained expression crossed the countenance of Kismet Brown. It was bad enough to sell his services in a menial occupation for the paltry sum of seven dollars a week, but to learn that the little shrimp of a man beside him was capitalizing those services to the extent of eight dollars cash profit weekly, plus social opportunity and vocal grandeur—that was gall and wormwood.

"You mus' be awful happy singin' all the time thataway," he suggested enviously.

Willie nodded.

"I is. Bass singin' is the fondest thing I is of."

"M'm! I loves good bass singin' my ownse'f."

The three other members of the Sweet Singers were already in tune when Willie arrived with his guest. Kismet was properly and profusely introduced. Then Quintus Weefalls rapped insistently upon a desk and ordered a practicing of Swing Low, Sweet Chariot. He sounded a pitiful note upon a puny pipe, and away they went; their voices low and sweet and clear, atoning in perfection of harmony for whatever lack there may have been in individual tonal qualities.

Throughout the song Willie Dime saw the beady eyes of his Gargantuan employé fixed speculatively—and somewhat critically—upon him. It was quite evident that Kismet was not unalloyedly enthusiastic. Willie was peeved. He was desirous of impressing Kismet with his own importance and he was sure that Swing Low, Sweet Chariot was no medium for the attainment of such an effect. Wherefore, immediately upon the conclusion of that number, he suggested to Quintus that they take a fall out of Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep.

Quintus consented because he didn't know how to refuse. Quintus, as a matter of fact, was not entirely pleased with Willie Dime; not that Willie wasn't an adequate bass—but he was merely that. There was no fire and depth and passion to the bass singing of the emaciated Mr. Dime. Unquestionably he was the weak member of the quartet, however better than all other colored Birmingham basses he might be.

Willie attacked Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep with excessive gusto. The amazingly large voice reverberated from out of the tiny frame with force and power. Willie sang with head thrown back and eyes focused raptly upon the ceiling. The first and second tenors and the lusty-lunged barytone furnished the accompaniment; but it was a bass song, and Willie lost no opportunity to shine. When the last watery grave had been dug he turned expectantly to Kismet Brown.

"Well," he inquired eagerly and triumphantly, "how did you like that?"

And then an astounding thing happened; a flagrant and apparently inexcusable exhibition of *lèse majesté*. The fat and bulbous head of Kismet shook slowly on the short neck.

"Not so good," commented Kismet. "Not so good at all."

The anticipatory smile froze upon Willie's lips. He stood rigid for a moment; then deep and abiding fury welled up in his soul.

"What ain't so good?"

"Yo' bass singin'."

Quintus Weefalls and the other members of the quartet edged closer.

Here was drama with a capital D—an employé criticizing the art of his employer. Willie was obsessed by a

murderous anger, and he flung a scathing question at his tormentor.

"I reckon you c'n sing it better than I, huh?"

Kismet nodded slowly; this was the golden opportunity for which he waited.

"I reckon so."

And now Quintus was keenly interested; Kismet was an impressive person. He looked like a bass singer.

"Le's us heah you," requested Mr. Weefalls.

Kismet was not reluctant. He hoisted himself to his feet, gestured the two tenors and the barytone about him, cocked his head on one side as he gave attentive ear to the pitch pipe, and then——

Mr. Kismet Brown knocked Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep for a goal. His voice, rich and true and possessing uncanny volume, filled the large hall. Once or twice he switched abruptly from the roaring quality of a giant waterfall to a soft and insinuating croon. As a bass singer it was early and positively evident that Willie Dime was a pale and pallid second. Then, as a crowning gesture of superiority, Kismet performed the last watery rites a full ten fathoms deeper than Willie had ever been able to go.

An audible silence followed the final long-drawn note; silence, and then a wildly jubilant howl of congratulation from Quintus Weefalls.

"Hot dam!" he enthused. "You is jus' the man I has been waitin' fo' ever since the Heavenly Harmony Sweet Singers was organized. Us needs a bass singer like you, Mistuh Brown, because you is the most bassest singer I has ever met up with."

Kismet flowered under the praise. He shook hands with the first tenor, the second tenor and the barytone. They clustered enthusiastically about him, plying him

with compliments which he accepted as a matter of course Only Willie Dime did not shake his hand; poor diminutive Willie Dime, standing miserably and forlornly on the outside looking in.

Premonition of disaster gripped the soul of Mr. Dime. Something informed him that he was about to become an ex-member of the Heavenly Harmony Sweet Singers, and at the bare thought he experienced an agony of soul that was well-nigh a physical ache. He slumped within himself and became smaller than he was; a pitiful, abject thing whose cup of bitterness was overflowed by the knowledge that his was the feeding hand that had been bitten.

The quartet tried three or four other numbers. In each of them Kismet Brown outstripped himself, and finally Mr. Weefalls' lips spoke the words which rang in Willie Dime's ears like the knell o' doom.

"Mistuh Brown," announced Quintus, "us craves that you should jine up with our quartet."

Before answering the invitation Kismet bestowed upon Willie a disdainful look. Then he turned his glance toward the eager members of the quartet.

"I assept," said he magniloquently. "It is a pleasure fo' the champeen cullud bass singer of the world to jine up with the best quartet. Le's practice."

Willie Dime wasted no breath or dignity in wild bewailings or futile protestations. He knew that he was finished, done and out; discarded as indifferently as a banana's kimono. He staggered out into the night. The sky was as overcast as his feelings. In a trice his cosmic scheme had gone flooey and he possessed an overpowering hunch that the end was not yet.

Mournfully he mooned down Eighteenth Street. Darktown's civic center was ablaze with light and urgent

with activity. Before the portals of the Champion Theater lounged an exquisitely haberdashed figure; a slender figure, the very personification of grace and elegance. Willie Dime, dilapidated, soul-sore and weary, accosted his very best friend and together they moved off.

Into the attentive ears of Florian Slappey Mr. Dime poured the story of Kismet's perfidy, omitting no damning detail. Florian heard him through with much shaking of head and many sympathetic tchk's. Willie, he confessed, was strictly up against it; Kismet Brown had committed an act that justified homicide, and if Mr. Dime was considering such— But Willie was entirely too miserable and too cautious to put his modest physique against the Herculean frame of the champion bass singer.

Florian was sympathetic, and Willie craved sympathy.

"N'r neither that bass singin' business ain't all the troubles which I has got, Florian. They's other ones too; an' bad as they was befo', they is fixin' to git wuss."

Florian inquired solicitously for details; he considered himself an adequate clearing house for the troubles of his friends.

"It's my barbecue stand," gloomed Willie.

"What about it?"

"It's libel to be took fum me."

"Who by?"

"Semore Mashby."

A grimace of intense distaste wreathed Mr. Slappey's classic physiognomy. In common with most persons of prominence in Darktown, he felt toward Mr. Mashby an intransigent antagonism. Mr. Mashby was by profession a money lender and by nature a usurer. There was much to be said against him and some little to his credit, but his staunchest friends never accused him of

failing to stand on the letter of his rights in a business deal.

"How come you to be skeered of Semore?" inquired Florian.

"Well"—Willie drew a long breath—"you know I bought offen him the lot which I has got my barbecue stand on."

"Yeh. Ain't you been meetin' yo' notes?"

"Ise met them notes all right—ten dollars ev'y month until I has paid six hund'ed dollars pu'chase money. 'Tain't them payments, Florian; it's this: That barbecue stand ain't mine!"

Florian shook his head.

"Whose is it?"

"Semore Mashby's."

"Shuh! You says words, Willie, but they don't mean nothin'. How come it that if you built that stand with yo' own money, an' ain't missed no payments, it belongs to Semore?"

"It's a terrible long story, Florian. Does you crave to heah it?"

"I don't crave nothin' else. Less'n it's a nice, sizzlin' barbecue sandwich."

Willie took the hint. They visited the Avenue F Barbecue Palace, where Willie prepared for his intimate friend a large portion of barbecue. This was donated to him along with a generous portion of butter, several slices of bread and a bottle of ginger ale. And while Florian munched contentedly Willie Dime poured forth the tale of his multitudinous worries.

Semore Mashby, it appeared, had been originally the possessor of a hundred-foot lot on Avenue F. The thing had been wished on him as forfeited collateral and for some months proved a white elephant. Then he had

divided it up into four twenty-five-foot lots, one of which had been sold to Mr. Dime. A second now boasted a shoe shop and a third had been sold, but never tenanted. The lot next to Willie's remained vacant, that and Willie's being the two center lots.

Willie paid Semore six hundred dollars for the lot—sixty ten-dollar payments, interest at 8 per cent, and, as Willie expressed it, "Each note bearin' its own interest," which was the same as saying that interest for the entire period had been figured up in advance and prorated on the sixty notes so that there was no advantage in anticipating any payment.

The deal between Semore and Willie was a lease-sale contract. The property remained in Semore's name until the sixtieth payment was made; and, not unnaturally, Willie desired a deed to his property, no matter how heavily that title was encumbered by a mortgage. Wherefore he had consulted Lawyer Evans Chew, foremost legal light of the colored professional fraternity, and in the course of that erudite attorney's investigations the horrid discovery was made that Willie Dime had constructed his three-hundred-dollar barbecue stand on the wrong lot.

The error, it appeared, was not an unnatural one. Semore had sold to Willie "the west half of the east half of that certain lot on Avenue F known as—" And Willie had proceeded to build upon the east half of the west half.

"There was just too many halfses an' easts an' wests an' all such as that," he proclaimed unhappily. "West half of the east half an' east half of the west half—di'n't none of it seem to make no sense to me."

"Does Semore know you built on the wrong lot?" asked Mr. Slappey.

"Nos-suh, he do not! An' you c'n figger fo' yo'se'f what happens does he find out."

Florian nodded; he knew well enough what the flinty-hearted Semore would do.

"An' Lawyer Chew says," pursued Willie, "that does you build a house on somebody's land, even if you thinks it's yourn—that house belongs to the other feller. So all I has done is to build Semore Mashby a good barbecue stan', an' it cost me th'ee hund'ed dollars cash money. Tha's how come this bass-singin' job meant so much. I was makin' good money singin' round, an' I was aimin' to get me enough to buy that other lot next to mine; then I could tell Semore Mashby where he could git off at. An' now—now Ise gwine be lucky does I pay espenses an' interest an' buy clothes; an' Ise skeered to death."

Mr. Slappey admitted that his friend had good cause for apprehension, which agreement did not in any way leaven the bread of Mr. Dime's abject misery. However, it had been a vast relief to chronicle his troubles and for that much he was sincerely grateful. He knew he could trust Florian, and realized that if there was any possible solution to his dilemma it would occur to Florian.

Until past midnight the two friends held a lodge of sorrow. Then Mr. Slappey, thoroughly gorged, rose and departed. For a long time after that Willie Dime sat staring at the walls of his modest little business establishment which stood upon terrain belonging to another man, and Mr. Dime knew a great and pervading sadness.

From that day on, however, as though to lighten his misery, the commercial gods smiled upon the barbecue venture and business picked up amazingly. The growing popularity of barbecue sandwiches for neighborhood suppers and joy-riding automobile parties became even

more pronounced, and Willie devoted his sole and exclusive attention to the task of building the business. A friend chided him upon his sudden retirement from active social life, and Mr. Dime favored his inquisitor with a frigid stare.

"Ise a hermick," he announced.

The friend grinned.

"You done became one sense Brother Brown took yo' bass-singin' job, huh?"

"I ain't intrusted in Kismet Brown n'r neither bass singin'. I ain't intrusted in nothin' no more. That is, nothin' 'cept makin' money."

But Willie Dime stretched fact when he made that statement. He was most keenly interested in the progress of the Heavenly Harmony Sweet Singers with their new basso profundo. Even as increasing success blessed his efforts at concocting luscious barbecue, just so greater triumphs perched upon the standard of the Sweet Singers. Quintus Weefalls found it necessary to reject proffered engagements and he dared even to increase the ante, for which his patrons stood cheerfully. But Mr. Weefalls' bliss was not unalloyed, for success did not sit kindly upon the Cimmerian brow of his new bass singer. Mr. Brown proclaimed his greatness to all and sundry and he proclaimed it loudly and frequently, thereby dimming considerably the glory that Mr. Weefalls had accepted hitherto as one of the delicious perquisites of his profession. Yet the fact was undeniable that Kismet was an excellent singer.

Willie Dime mourned the loss of his art. Occasionally he gave melancholy voice to some bass ballad in the sanctuary of his fragrant shop, but there was a feeling of guilt in this practice, as though he were trespassing upon forbidden ground.

But while Willie was lamenting the loss of his avocation and Kismet Brown was informing the world that he was the supremest bass singer extant, other things were happening that bore directly upon the situation. It started when Semore Mashby dropped in at Willie Dime's place and consumed a tasty barbecue sandwich and a bowl of Brunswick stew. It so happened that the emporium was crowded at the time and both Willie and his cook were excruciatingly busy. The tiny cash register was tinkling gayly and there was an air of pervasive prosperity hovering about the establishment.

Semore was enormously impressed. He exhibited the same degree of interest in Willie's dollars that a lean and hungry bird dog does in the scent of quail on a chill December day. From the Avenue F Barbecue Palace Semore returned to his musty, dusty office on Eighteenth Street and summoned to his august presence the pompous Mr. Kismet Brown.

"As I un'erstan' it," commenced Semore, "you used to wuk fo' Brother Dime."

Kismet nodded; he was slightly offended that he should be reminded of his once menial station.

"What kind of a business has Mistuh Dime got?"

"Good," answered Kismet truthfully. "In fac' I might say that it is excellent."

"H'm! If they's money in a stan' like he's got, it seems to me there ought to be a fortune in a real swelegant place."

"You said it, Brother Mashby."

Semore inspected the other critically.

"You is an espert barbecue man, ain't you?"

"Uh-huh."

"An' you knows just how Willie wuks his trade?"

"I don't know nothin' else."

"H'm! Brother Brown, how would you appeal to an idea of makin' a heap of money?"

The Adam's apple of the visitor quivered. Affluence appealed irresistibly and he said so. Semore consulted a sheet of paper upon which appeared many figures.

"I owns the lot next to Willie Dime's," he vouchsafed at length. "An' I makes you this proposition: I sells you the lot fo' fifteen hund'ed dollars—" Semore hesitated briefly; he recalled that six hundred was the price received from Willie for the adjoining lot. "An' I inwests fifteen hund'ed mo' in building you a swell, white-tiled barbecue stand right next to hisn. That makes th'ee thousan' dollars which I inwests an' which you owes me. You pays me thutty dollars a month plus 8 per cent interest, each note bearing its own. An' fo' my inwestment, I gits a half interest in the profits of the business. What does you say?"

For a moment Kismet Brown said nothing. His none too agile brain was busy grappling with the problem in simple arithmetic. He immediately discarded the item of 8 per cent interest as being unimportant and drove to the essentials of the transaction. All he could see was that without the expenditure of a penny he assumed an obligation of thirty dollars a month in return for which he was to receive a sure-fire business which should net several times that amount. Too, the idea of combating Willie Dime and exterminating that gentleman as a business man was not without its appeal; quite unreasonably, Kismet felt a sense of antagonism toward Mr. Dime.

He envisioned a white-tiled barbecue stand, modern equipment—why, the thing seemed entirely too good to be true, and he wasted no further time in announcing his positive and definite acceptance.

Whereupon Semore himself drafted the contract and

two one-dollar bills were solemnly exchanged by way of mutual consideration. When the conspirators shook hands it was with firm grip of mutual elation. Each felt that an excellent bargain had been driven, and each experienced an unworthy and unholy delight in contemplation of the discomfiture that was brewing for the inoffensive Willie Dime.

Precisely one week later there appeared on "the west half of the east half of a certain lot on Avenue F known as lot Number—" several overalled workmen, a load of bricks and a truckload of lumber. The foreman planted tiny stakes, stretched a white string between them and work was started upon a new barbecue stand. And that afternoon came Kismet Brown, the proprietor to be. Mr. Brown was quite unable to withstand the temptation of gloating over his ex-employer and future business rival.

Willie met him outside. There was open hostility in the clash of eyes.

"Mawnin', Brother Dime." Kismet's geniality was positively insulting. "I hope you is well this fine day."

"An' I hope you ain't," snapped Willie. "Any time you happens to be hangin' round where a accident is at, I hope it happens to you."

Kismet smiled lightly and shrugged his hefty shoulders.

"Shuh! Willie, you suttinly do harbor ill feelin's. What you ought to do is learn to love yo' neighbor like yo'se'f."

"Ain't got no neighbor."

"Not yet!"

"What you mean—not yet?"

"You is soon gwine have."

"Says which?"

"Says you soon is gwine have a neighbor."

"Who?"

"Me."

"How come?"

With much display of gloating gusto Kismet explained that he was constructing the finest barbecue stand in the state of Alabama, if not in the entire world. It was, he informed Willie, to be an affair of brick and selected lumber and white tile, with equipment of the most modern, most expensive and most efficient model. Willie gave close ear to the recital of woes in store for him. His eyes opened wide, and when Kismet completed the tale Willie made a gesture of aghastment.

"You big mis'able bum, you! Not on'y you does me out of my bass-singin' job but also you fixes to ruin my business. Had you a tail, Kismet Brown, I suttinly would know you was a snake."

After which tirade Mr. Willie Dime turned and fairly ran into his barbecue stand, leaving Mr. Brown staring amusedly. Kismet felt a superior tolerance for his rival —a sort of merciless pity.

But once safely within the confines of his shop, Willie Dime's entire demeanor altered. The expression of intense lugubriosity left his features and in its stead came a look of undiluted glee. He was beatitude personified. He clasped skinny hands on narrow hips and rocked with deep silent laughter.

"Hot dam!" he chortled. "What I does to that fat ol' buzzard an' ol' Semore Mashby now! Let 'm suffer— tha's me! I'll learn 'em to cheat me out of my bass-singin' job an' my barbecue stan'! I'll learn 'em! All they don't know is that they is buildin' that white-tile place on my lot. Soon as they gets same done, I swaps! Then just watch! Oh, Lawsy!"

Nor did anything occur during the process of construction to mar the rapture that permeated the soul of Mr.

Dime. Occasionally Semore Mashby visited the scene of operations, and upon these occasions Willie Dime talked to him, protesting violently and loudly and wildly against this unfair competition. To each and all these protestations Semore turned a deaf ear and a malicious smile. He announced that he lived for the purpose of accumulating money and it didn't matter particularly to him how he did it.

"But you is gwine ruin me!" howled Willie sadly.

"Any man which cain't look after hisse'f deserves to be ruint," returned Semore.

Willie retreated. It was difficult long to maintain the camouflage of misery when his heart was rippling with thanksgiving. Yet he continued to play his rôle of sufferer; it seemed to afford Semore and Kismet such keen pleasure. And, to make quite certain of his position, Willie went once again to Lawyer Chew and checked up on his idea that the white-tile stand was being constructed on his lot and would become his property whenever he chose to claim it. It was a sweet and noble revenge he planned in repayment of the persecution that had been heaped upon his meager head.

Construction work was pushed through at top speed. The new stand, a jewel of modernity and whiteness, took shape swiftly and beautifully. Willie gazed upon it with growing affection, and his contentment was not lessened by the knowledge that when the swap was effected, Kismet would still be tied up on a contract to pay Semore thirty dollars a month for one hundred months for the east half of the west half of the lot, upon the twenty-five-foot frontage of which reposed the drab and shabby shop now tenanted by Mr. Willie Dime.

Came the gala day when, with much silver-throated vocalizing by the Heavenly Harmony Sweet Singers, the

new barbecue stand was opened. Early that morning a wagon had appeared carrying upon it the final touch of glory——a huge electric sign bearing the single and arresting word "Barbecue." Over the doorway was another sign:

WHITE TILE BARBECUE PARLOR
Neat Cheap Suckulent
We Serve Barbecue as is Barbecue
Sandwiches 10 cents. Barbecue 65 cents pound
Mr. Kismet Brown, Prop.

Darktown flocked to the new stand to wonder and to eat. Friends of Willie Dime reported that truly excellent barbecue was being dispensed by Mr. Brown.

"Tain't no wonder," snapped Mr. Dime. "He went an' hired my cook offen me."

Nor did Mr. Dime bother to explain that he was very well pleased with the presence of his pet cook in the next-door establishment.

Kismet Brown was present in a body; and Semore Mashby was there, hawk-eyed and crustily genial, rubbing skinny dry palms together as he gave ear to the incessant rattle of cash receipts. Mr. Mashby believed that he had negotiated a highly attractive deal; not only had he sold a five-hundred-dollar piece of property for fifteen hundred, but in consideration of an additional loan of fifteen hundred he had secured for himself 8 per cent interest plus a 50 per cent share in the profits of what promised to be a healthy business.

The genuine test, however, did not come until that night when automobile parties commenced drawing up at the curb and ordering boxes of sandwiches. That trade always had been the mainstay of the business, and tonight it was evident that the dilapidated shack which

housed Willie Dime's business was being distinctly passed up in favor of the new and glittering place of Mr. Brown. Somehow automobilists were unable to see Willie's establishment for the radiance of Kismet's.

One loyal customer did seek to patronize Willie. That gentleman shook a mournful head.

"Nex'-door stan' serves better barbecue," he confessed. "You-all white folks better buy yo' eatments there."

That was the beginning of a campaign Machiavellian in its cunning, sweeping in scope. For, quite deliberately, Willie Dime diverted from his place and toward that of his arch enemy such little business as might have remained. He did not do it crudely, nor all at once. Within a month it was generally known, however, that the best barbecue was to be obtained at the White Tile, and the gross receipts of the Palace were pitifully small. On the other hand, it became clear early in the game that Mr. Brown would reap a neat monthly harvest after deducting the payment to Semore Mashby and his inconsiderable overhead expenses.

Kismet was all puffed up with the over-weening pride that immediately precedes a fall. The bass-singing business was going better than ever, and if his insufferable vanity had rubbed Quintus Weefalls the wrong way, he was yet too effective a master of low notes to warrant his dismissal from the quartet. And the White Tile built up a clientele that outstripped two for one anything the Palace had ever known in the halcyon days of its greatest prosperity.

Willie Dime waited just long enough; waited gleefully until the business of his own shop was completely and teetotally wrecked, until it was diverted *in toto* to the ornate establishment next door. And then one bright and sunny morning he called upon Kismet Brown. With

him was the pompous and ponderous Lawyer Evans Chew. They found Kismet chatting comfortably with his partner, the emaciated Semore Mashby.

Willie greeted them cheerfully. He fairly bubbled with good humor. This was his hour of glory and he had no intention of sacrificing one iota of vengeance.

He and the attorney stopped just within the doorway. Willie cast a critically approving eye. The white polished walls reflected the joviality of his expression. He cocked his head judicially on one side, and ignoring the curious stares of Kismet and Semore, addressed a casual remark to his attorney.

"Lawyer Chew," he said lightly, "what does you think of this place I has got heah?"

Chew was no mean histrionic artist. He disliked Semore Mashby intensely and was not overly fond of the new bass singer.

"'Tain't so wuss, Brother Dime. In fact I might espostulate that you is seized and possessed of a most adequate an' representative establishment in fee simple, your heirs an' assigns forever."

"Ain't it the truth?" Willie didn't know just what Lawyer Chew had said, but he did recognize it as grand talking. "I sho'ly does own somethin' wuth while."

"Absotively, Brother Dime. I is proud to be the lawyer of the man which is possessed of such a place as this heah place is, an'—"

Through all the colloquy Semore Mashby and Kismet Brown had remained motionless. Occasionally they glanced at each other, their expressions indicating utter bewilderment. That something was transpiring they were well aware, but they did not as yet suspect the nature of that something. Finally Kismet Brown could stand it no longer.

"Hey, you, big boy!" Lawyer Evans Chew writhed at the familiarity. "What you mean by all this seize an' possess assigns forever fumadiddles, anyway?"

Chew turned upon the other man a cold and fishy eye. Then he addressed Willie Dime.

"Will you kindly infohm me, Brother Dime, who this obtrusive pusson is?"

"Who?" Willie inspected the room. "Oh, him? He's the poor feller which owns that bum barbecue stan' nex' do'—pervided he ever finishes payin' th'ee thousan' dollars fo' it."

Kismet Brown emitted a large howl. He swore largely and violently and threatened them with forcible ejectment. But Semore Mashby, knowing Lawyer Chew by bitter past experience, requested an explanation.

Lawyer Chew gave it. He gave it with grim and unswerving clarity of detail. A horrid error had been made, he explained. If Mr. Mashby would consult the records he would see that he had sold to Mr. Dime the west half of the east half of the original hundred-foot plot. Unfortunately Mr. Dime had built upon the east half of the west half; but since Mr. Mashby had been constructively aware that Mr. Dime was so doing, he—Mr. Mashby—was legally estopped from preventing Mr. Dime from now claiming the property which was rightfully his.

It so happened, Lawyer Chew further averred, that just recently Mr. Dime had made the ghastly discovery of that mistake; and now, as the rightful owner of the west half of the east half, he claimed it under the original lease-sale contract. Of course, Mr. Dime realized that any buildings erected upon this property became a part of the realty and passed with the land, and he therefore was regretfully reconciled to the fact that his building

would revert to Mr. Mashby, or to any person to whom Mr. Mashby might have happened to deed that property. Lawyer Chew understood that the east half of the west half had been conveyed to one Kismet Brown, in which case Mr. Brown automatically became possessed of the lot and of the buildings thereon erected.

The sonorous voice droned on and on, dripping legal phrases and oozing vitriol disguised as balm. But Semore Mashby had heard enough. It was his expression of consternation which informed Kismet Brown that a dream was ended. They were too crushed to comprehend immediately the extent of the disaster. They sought legal aid, only to make the appalling discovery that Lawyer Chew was on solid ground. And so, after being allowed a reasonable time, the tenancy of the two lots was exchanged, and Willie Dime moved into the White Tile.

"An' b'lieve me," he promised himself, "the behindest I ever gits with my payments to Semore is five months in adwance."

Desperately Semore struggled to save something from the wreckage. The personalty which had been rescued from the White Tile was installed in Willie's ex-stand. But it was no go. Mr. Dime had worked with too great efficiency to permit a rebuilding of trade by his old establishment. Besides, under his expert guidance, the White Tile was supplying tastier barbecue and better service than ever before.

Kismet Brown was not yet quite clear what had occurred, but he suddenly realized that Birmingham was not so attractive a place as he had fancied. Nor was it made more attractive by the thought that he was obligated under a personal contract to pay Semore Mashby three thousand dollars for a lot and building worth less

than eight hundred, and a business which was notable chiefly for its lack of vitality.

He omitted a payment to Semore—then another and another. And finally Mr. Mashby garnisheed certain moneys which were due Kismet as a member of the Heavenly Harmony Sweet Singers. That was the final straw that gave the camel neuritis. It was readily apparent to Kismet that he could support Semore in luxury by remaining in Birmingham, and himself not at all. Logic helped him out of his dilemma and out of the city.

He slid out of Birmingham one dank and drippy night; passed unobserved through the Terminal Station, bound for parts unknown; and the following morning several things happened.

For one thing, Quintus Weefalls found himself booked for the night at a flat price of twenty-five dollars —and extremely minus a bass singer. He called upon Willie Dime and masticated a large slice of humble pie, as the result of which Willie magnanimously consented to resume the practice of his bass-singing art where he had left off.

And then, while Willie gazed upon the cloudless sky and found it blue, a lean and melancholy figure appeared on the lot which was down on the records as the east half of the west half. Semore reeked of misery. His unhappiness was of a quality that satisfied even Willie Dime. But even at that Mr. Dime was human; he could not forgo the rapture of a conversation with one who only recently had sought his ruin.

"Mawnin', Mistuh Mashby."

"Humph!"

"Swell day, ain't it?"

"Pff!"

"I has heard rumors, Semore, that Mistuh Kismet Brown has depahted elsewhere."

Mention of Kismet's name excited Semore to profanity. Willie gazed with simulated friendship upon the emaciated figure of the ebony-hued usurer.

"Seems like to me Brother Brown kind of done you dirt, Semore. Like you said to me once, though, a feller which cain't look after hisse'f deserves what he gits. Ain't it so?"

"Shut yo' mouf!"

"My breff is as good as anybody's, I reckon. As I was sayin', you made a writin' with Kismet which must of seemed awful good to you—once. It give you a half interest in a goin' business. I was thinkin' this mawnin', Brother Mashby, that what you has got a half interest in now ain't a goin' business but a went business."

Willie's good humor was not shared even in part by the dour Semore.

"How come you ever to think about gittin' in the barbecue business anyway, Semore?"

Mr. Mashby raised wrathful eyes.

"Florian Slappey suggested it to me," he snapped. "If I ever lays my eyes on that wuthless, good-fo'-nothin', no-'count——"

Willie Dime clasped his hands rapturously.

"Florian Slappey, eh? Now what does you know 'bout that? I never thought you would pay no 'tention to Florian, Brother Mashby. But in this case it worked out real nice, because I was the man who suggested to Florian that he should git suggestive with you!"

Octavus Roy Cohen.

EDNA FERBER

OLD MAN MINICK

His wife had always spoiled him outrageously. No doubt of that. Take, for example, the matter of the pillows merely. Old man Minick slept high. That is, he thought he slept high. He liked two plump pillows on his side of the great, wide, old-fashioned cherry bed. He would sink into them with a vast grunting and sighing and puffing expressive of nerves and muscles relaxed and gratified. But in the morning there was always one pillow on the floor. He had thrown it there. Always, in the morning, there it lay, its plump white cheek turned reproachfully up at him from the side of the bed. Ma Minick knew this, naturally, after forty years of the cherry bed. But she never begrudged him that extra pillow. Each morning, when she arose, she picked it up on her way to shut the window. Each morning the bed was made up with two pillows on his side of it, as usual.

Then there was the window. Ma Minick liked it open wide. Old man Minick, who rather prided himself on his modernism (he called it being up to date), was distrustful of the night air. In the folds of its sable mantle lurked a swarm of dread things—colds, clammy miasmas, fevers.

"Night air's just like any other air," Ma Minick would say, with some asperity. Ma Minick was no worm; and as modern as he. So when they went to bed the window would be open wide. They would lie there, the two old ones, talking comfortably about commonplace things. The kind of talk that goes on between a man and a woman who had lived together in wholesome peace (spiced with occasional wholesome bickerings) for more than forty years.

"Remind me to see Gerson to-morrow about that lock on the basement door. The paper's full of burglars."

"If I think of it." She never failed to.

"George and Nettie haven't been over in a week now."

"Oh, well, young folks . . . Did you stop in and pay that Koritz the fifty cents for pressing your suit?"

"By golly, I forgot again! First thing in the morning."

A sniff. "Just smell the Yards." It was Chicago.

"Wind must be from the west."

Sleep came with reluctant feet, but they wooed her patiently. And presently she settled down between them and they slept lightly. Usually, some time during the night, he awoke, slid cautiously and with infinite stealth from beneath the covers and closed the wide-flung window to within a bare two inches of the sill. Almost invariably she heard him; but she was a wise old woman; a philosopher of parts. She knew better than to allow a window to shatter the peace of their marital felicity. As she lay there, smiling a little grimly in the dark and giving no sign of being awake, she thought, "Oh, well, I guess a closed window won't kill me either."

Still, sometimes, just to punish him a little, and to prove that she was nobody's fool, she would wait until he had dropped off to sleep again and then she, too,

would achieve a stealthy trip to the window and would raise it slowly, carefully, inch by inch.

"How did that window come to be open?" he would say in the morning, being a poor dissembler.

"Window? Why, it's just the way it was when we went to bed." And she would stoop to pick up the pillow that lay on the floor.

There was little or no talk of death between this comfortable, active, sound-appearing man of almost seventy and this plump capable woman of sixty-six. But as always, between husband and wife, it was understood wordlessly (and without reason) that old man Minick would go first. Not that either of them had the slightest intention of going. In fact, when it happened they were planning to spend the winter in California and perhaps live there indefinitely if they liked it and didn't get too lonesome for George and Nettie, and the Chicago smoke, Chicago noise, and Chicago smells and rush and dirt. Still, the solid sum paid yearly in insurance premiums showed clearly that he meant to leave her in comfort and security. Besides, the world is full of widows. Everyone sees that. But how many widowers? Few. Widows there are by the thousands; living alone; living in hotels; living with married daughters and sons-in-law or married sons and daughters-in-law. But of widowers in a like situation there are bewilderingly few. And why this should be no one knows.

So, then. The California trip never materialized. And the year that followed never was quite clear in old man Minick's dazed mind. In the first place, it was the year in which stocks tumbled and broke their backs. Gilt-edged securities showed themselves to be tinsel. Old man Minick had retired from active business just one year before, meaning to live comfortably on the fruit of a

half-century's toil. He now saw that fruit rotting all about him. There was in it hardly enough nourishment to sustain them. Then came the day when Ma Minick went downtown to see Matthews about that pain right here and came home looking shrivelled, talking shrilly about nothing, and evading Pa's eyes. Followed months that were just a jumble of agony, X-rays, hope, despair, morphia, nothingness.

After it was all over: "But I was going first," old man Minick said, dazedly.

The old house on Ellis near Thirty-ninth was sold for what it would bring. George, who knew Chicago real-estate if any one did, said they might as well get what they could. Things would only go lower. You'll see. And nobody's going to have any money for years. Besides, look at the neighborhood!

Old man Minick said George was right. He said everybody was right. You would hardly have recognized in this shrunken figure and wattled face the spruce and dressy old man whom Ma Minick used to spoil so delightfully. "You know best, George. You know best." He who used to stand up to George until Ma Minick was moved to say, "Now, Pa, you don't know everything."

After Matthews' bills, and the hospital, and the nurses and the medicines and the thousand and one things were paid there was left exactly five hundred dollars a year.

"You're going to make your home with us, Father," George and Nettie said. Alma, too, said this would be the best. Alma, the married daughter, lived in Seattle. "Though you know Ferd and I would be only too glad to have you."

Seattle! The ends of the earth. Oh, no. No! he protested, every fibre of his old frame clinging to the accustomed. Seattle, at seventy! He turned piteous eyes

on his son George and his daughter-in-law Nettie. "You're going to make your home with us, Father," they reassured him. He clung to them gratefully. After it was over Alma went home to her husband and their children.

So now he lived with George and Nettie in the five-room flat on South Park Avenue, just across from Washington Park. And there was no extra pillow on the floor.

Nettie hadn't said he couldn't have the extra pillow. He had told her he used two and she had given him two the first week. But every morning she had found a pillow cast on the floor.

"I thought you used two pillows, Father."

"I do."

"But there's always one on the floor when I make the bed in the morning. You always throw one on the floor. You only sleep on one pillow, really."

"I use two pillows."

But the second week there was one pillow. He tossed and turned a good deal there in his bedroom off the kitchen. But he got used to it in time. Not used to it, exactly, but—well——

The bedroom off the kitchen wasn't as menial as it sounds. It was really rather cosy. The five-room flat held living room, front bedroom, dining room, kitchen, and maid's room. The room off the kitchen was intended as a maid's room but Nettie had no maid. George's business had suffered with the rest. George and Nettie had said, "I wish there was a front room for you, Father. You could have ours and we'd move back here, only this room's too small for twin beds and the dressing table and the chiffonier." They had meant it—or meant to mean it.

"This is fine," old man Minick had said. "This is good enough for anybody." There was a narrow white enamel bed and a tiny dresser and a table. Nettie had made gay cretonne covers and spreads and put a little reading lamp on the table and arranged his things. Ma Minick's picture was on the dresser with her mouth sort of pursed to make it look small. It wasn't a recent picture. Nettie and George had had it framed for him as a surprise. They had often urged her to have a picture taken, but she had dreaded it. Old man Minick didn't think much of that photograph, though he never said so. He needed no photograph of Ma Minick. He had a dozen of them; a gallery of them; thousands of them. Lying on his one pillow he could take them out and look at them one by one as they passed in review, smiling, serious, chiding, praising, there in the dark. He needed no picture on his dresser.

A handsome girl, Nettie, and a good girl. He thought of her as a girl, though she was well past thirty. George and Nettie had married late. This was only the third year of their marriage. Alma, the daughter, had married young, but George had stayed on, unwed, in the old house on Ellis until he was thirty-six and all Ma Minick's friends' daughters had had a try at him in vain. The old people had urged him to marry, but it had been wonderful to have him around the house, just the same. Somebody young around the house. Not that George had stayed around very much. But when he was there you knew he was there. He whistled while dressing. He sang in the bath. He roared down the stairway, "Ma, where's my clean shirts?" The telephone rang for him. Ma Minick prepared special dishes for him. The servant girl said, "Oh, now, Mr. George, look what you've done! Gone and spilled the grease all over my clean kitchen

floor!" and wiped it up adoringly while George laughed and gobbled his bit of food filched from pot or frying pan.

They had been a little surprised about Nettie. George was in the bond business and she worked for the same firm. A plump, handsome, eye-glassed woman with fine fresh colouring, a clear skin that old man Minick called appetizing, and a great coil of smooth dark hair. She wore plain tailored things and understood the bond business in a way that might have led you to think hers a masculine mind if she hadn't been so feminine, too, in her manner. Old man Minick had liked her better than Ma Minick had.

Nettie had called him Pop and joked with him and almost flirted with him in a daughterly sort of way. He liked to squeeze her plump arm and pinch her soft cheek between thumb and forefinger. She would laugh up at him and pat his shoulder and that shoulder would straighten spryly and he would waggle his head doggishly.

"Look out there, George!" the others in the room would say. "Your dad'll cut you out. First thing you know you'll lose your girl, that's all."

Nettie would smile. Her teeth were white and strong and even. Old man Minick would laugh and wink, immensely pleased and flattered. "We understand each other, don't we, Pop?" Nettie would say.

During the first years of their married life Nettie stayed home. She fussed happily about her little flat, gave parties, went to parties, played bridge. She seemed to love the ease, the relaxation, the small luxuries. She and George were very much in love. Before her marriage she had lived in a boarding house on Michigan Avenue. At mention of it now she puckered up her

face. She did not attempt to conceal her fondness for these five rooms of hers, so neat, so quiet, so bright, so cosy. Over-stuffed velvet in the living room, with silk lamp-shades, and small tables holding books and magazines and little boxes containing cigarettes or hard candies.. Very modern. A gate-legged table in the dining room. Caramel-coloured walnut in the bedroom, rich and dark and smooth. She loved it. An orderly woman. Everything in its place. Before eleven o'clock the little apartment was shining, spotless; cushions plumped, crumbs brushed, vegetables in cold water. The telephone. "Hello! . . . Oh, hello, Bess! Oh, hours ago . . . Not a thing . . . Well, if George is willing . . . I'll call him up and ask him. We haven't seen a show in two weeks. I'll call you back within the next half hour . . . No, I haven't done my marketing yet. . . . Yes, and have dinner downtown. Meet at seven."

Into this orderly smooth-running mechanism was catapulted a bewildered old man. She no longer called him Pop. He never dreamed of squeezing the plump arm or pinching the smooth cheek. She called him Father. Sometimes George's Father. Sometimes, when she was telephoning, there came to him—"George's father's living with us now, you know. I can't."

They were very kind to him, Nettie and George. "Now just you sit right down here, Father. What do you want to go poking off into your own room for?"

He remembered that in the last year Nettie had said something about going back to work. There wasn't enough to do around the house to keep her busy. She was sick of afternoon parties. Sew and eat, that's all, and gossip, or play bridge. Besides, look at the money. Business was awful. The two old people had resented

this idea as much as George had—more, in fact. They were scandalized.

"Young folks nowadays!" shaking their heads. "Young folks nowadays. What are they thinking of! In my days when you got married you had babies."

George and Nettie had had no babies. At first Nettie had said, "I'm so happy. I just want a chance to rest. I've been working since I was seventeen. I just want to rest, first." One year. Two years. Three. And now Pa Minick.

Ma Minick, in the old house on Ellis Avenue, had kept a loose sort of larder; not lavish, but plentiful. They both ate a great deal, as old people are likely to do. Old man Minick, especially, had liked to nibble. A handful of raisins from the box on the shelf. A couple of nuts from the dish on the sideboard. A bit of candy rolled beneath the tongue. At dinner (sometimes, toward the last, even at noon-time) a plate of steaming soup, hot, revivifying, stimulating. Plenty of this and plenty of that. "What's the matter, Jo? You're not eating." But he was, amply. Ma Minick had liked to see him eat too much. She was wrong, of course.

But at Nettie's things were different. Hers was a sufficient but stern ménage. So many mouths to feed; just so many lamb chops. Nettie knew about calories and vitamines and mysterious things like that, and talked about them. So many calories in this. So many calories in that. He never was quite clear in his mind about these things said to be lurking in his food. He had always thought of spinach as spinach, chops as chops. But to Nettie they were calories. They lunched together, these two. George was, of course, downtown. For herself Nettie would have one of those feminine pick-up

lunches; a dab of apple sauce, a cup of tea, and a slice of cold toast left from breakfast. This she would eat while old man Minick guiltily supped up his cup of warmed-over broth, or his coddled egg. She always pressed upon him any bit of cold meat that was left from the night before, or any remnants of vegetable or spaghetti. Often there was quite a little fleet of saucers and sauce plates grouped about his main plate. Into these he dipped and swooped uncomfortably, and yet with a relish. Sometimes, when he had finished, he would look about, furtively.

"What'll you have, Father? Can I get you something?"

"Nothing, Nettie, nothing. I'm doing fine." She had finished the last of her wooden toast and was waiting for him, kindly.

Still, this balanced and scientific fare seemed to agree with him. As the winter went on he seemed actually to have regained most of his former hardiness and vigour. A handsome old boy he was, ruddy, hale, with the zest of a juicy old apple, slightly withered but still sappy. It should be mentioned that he had a dimple in his cheek which flashed unexpectedly when he smiled. It gave him a roguish—almost boyish—effect most appealing to the beholder. Especially the feminine beholder. Much of his spoiling at the hands of Ma Minick had doubtless been due to this mere depression of the skin.

Spring was to bring a new and welcome source of enrichment into his life. But these first six months of his residence with George and Nettie were hard. No spoiling there. He missed being made much of. He got kindness, but he needed love. Then, too, he was rather a gabby old man. He liked to hold forth. In the old house on Ellis there had been visiting back and

forth between men and women of his own age, and Ma's. At these gatherings he had waxed oratorical or argumentative, and they had heard him, some in agreement, some in disagreement, but always respectfully, whether he prated of real estate or social depravity; prohibition or European exchange.

"Let me tell you, here and now, something's got to be done before you can get a country back on a sound financial basis. Why, take Russia alone, why . . ." Or: "Young people nowadays! They don't know what respect means. I tell you there's got to be a change and there will be, and it's the older generation that's got to bring it about. What do they know of hardship! What do they know about work—real work. Most of 'em's never done a real day's work in their life. All they think of is dancing and gambling and drinking. Look at the way they dress! Look at . . ."

Ad lib.

"That's so," the others would agree. "I was saying only yesterday . . ."

Then, too, until a year or two before, he had taken active part in business. He had retired only at the urging of Ma and the children. They said he ought to rest and play and enjoy himself.

Now, as his strength and good spirits gradually returned he began to go downtown, mornings. He would dress, carefully, though a little shakily. He had always shaved himself and he kept this up. All in all, during the day, he occupied the bathroom literally for hours, and this annoyed Nettie to the point of frenzy, though she said nothing. He liked the white cheerfulness of the little tiled room. He puddled about in the water endlessly. Snorted and splashed and puffed and snuffled and blew. He was one of those audible washers who emerge drip-

ping and whose ablutions are distributed impartially over ceiling, walls, and floor.

Nettie, at the closed door: "Father, are you all right?" Splash! Prrrf! "Yes. Sure. I'm all right."

"Well, I didn't know. You've been in there so long."

He was a neat old man, but there was likely to be a spot or so on his vest or his coat lapel, or his tie. Ma used to remove these, on or off him, as the occasion demanded, rubbing carefully and scolding a little, making a chiding sound between tongue and teeth indicative of great impatience of his carelessness. He had rather enjoyed these sounds, and this rubbing and scratching on the cloth with the fingernail and a moistened rag. They indicated that someone cared. Cared about the way he looked. Had pride in him. Loved him. Nettie never removed spots. Though infrequently she said, "Father, just leave that suit out, will you? I'll send it to the cleaner's with George's. The man's coming tomorrow morning." He would look down at himself, hastily, and attack a spot here and there with a futile fingernail.

His morning toilette completed, he would make for the Fifty-first Street L. Seated in the train he would assume an air of importance and testy haste; glance out of the window; look at his watch. You got the impression of a handsome and well-preserved old gentleman on his way downtown to consummate a shrewd business deal. He had been familiar with Chicago's downtown for fifty years and he could remember when State Street was a tree-shaded cottage district. The noise and rush and clangour of the Loop had long been familiar to him. But now he seemed to find the downtown trip arduous, even hazardous. The roar of the elevated trains, the hoarse hoots of the motor horns, the clang of the street cars, the bedlam that is Chicago's downtown district bewildered

him, frightened him almost. He would skip across the street like a harried hare, just missing a motor truck's nose and all unconscious of the stream of invective directed at him by its charioteer. "Heh! Whatcha! . . . Look!"— Sometimes a policeman came to his aid, or attempted to, but he resented this proffered help.

"Say, look here, my lad," he would say to the tall, tired, and not at all burly (standing on one's feet directing traffic at Wabash and Madison for eight hours a day does not make for burliness) policeman, "I've been coming downtown since long before you were born. You don't need to help me. I'm no jay from the country."

He visited the Stock Exchange. This depressed him. Stocks were lower than ever and still going down. His five hundred a year was safe, but the rest seemed doomed for his lifetime, at least. He would drop in at George's office. George's office was pleasantly filled with dapper, neat young men and (surprisingly enough) dapper, slim young women, seated at desks in the big light-flooded room. At one corner of each desk stood a polished metal placard on a little standard, and bearing the name of the desk's occupant. Mr. Owens. Mr. Satterlee. Mr. James. Miss Rauch. Mr. Minick.

"Hello, Father," Mr. Minick would say, looking annoyed. "What's bringing you down?"

"Oh, nothing. Nothing. Just had a little business to tend to over at the Exchange. Thought I'd drop in. How's business?"

"Rotten."

"I should think it was!" Old man Minick would agree. "I—should—think—it—was! Hm."

George wished he wouldn't. He couldn't have it, that's all. Old man Minick would stroll over to the desk marked Satterlee, or Owens, or James. These brisk

young men would toss an upward glance at him and concentrate again on the sheets and files before them. Old man Minick would stand, balancing from heel to toe and blowing out his breath a little. He looked a bit yellow and granulated and wavering, there in the cruel morning light of the big plate glass windows. Or perhaps it was the contrast he presented with these slim, slick young salesmen.

"Well, h'are you to-day, Mr.—uh—Satterlee? What's the good word?"

Mr. Satterlee would not glance up this time. "I'm pretty well. Can't complain."

"Good. Good."

"Anything I can do for you?"

"No-o-o. No. Not a thing. Just dropped in to see my son a minute."

"I see." Not unkindly. Then, as old man Minick still stood there, balancing, Mr. Satterlee would glance up again, frowning a little. "Your son's desk is over there, I believe. Yes."

George and Nettie had a bedtime conference about these visits and Nettie told him, gently, that the bond house head objected to friends and relatives dropping in. It was against office rules. It had been so when she was employed there. Strictly business. She herself had gone there only once since her marriage.

Well, that was all right. Business was like that nowadays. Rush and grab and no time for anything.

The winter was a hard one, with a record snowfall and intense cold. He stayed indoors for days together. A woman of his own age in like position could have occupied herself usefully and happily. She could have hemmed a sash-curtain; knitted or crocheted; tidied a room; taken a hand in the cooking or preparing of food;

ripped an old gown; made over a new one; indulged in an occasional afternoon festivity with women of her own years. But for old man Minick there were no small tasks. There was nothing he could do to make his place in the household justifiable. He wasn't even particularly good at those small jobs of hammering, or painting, or general "fixing." Nettie could drive a nail more swiftly, more surely than he. "Now, Father, don't you bother. I'll do it. Just you go and sit down. Isn't it time for your afternoon nap?"

He waxed a little surly. "Nap! I just got up. I don't want to sleep my life away."

George and Nettie frequently had guests in the evening. They played bridge, or poker, or talked.

"Come in, Father," George would say. "Come in. You all know Dad, don't you, folks?" He would sit down, uncertainly. At first he had attempted to expound, as had been his wont in the old house on Ellis. "I want to say, here and now, that this country's got to . . ." But they went on, heedless of him. They interrupted or refused, politely, to listen. So he sat in the room, yet no part of it. The young people's talk swirled and eddied all about him. He was utterly lost in it. Now and then Nettie or George would turn to him and with raised voice (he was not at all deaf and prided himself on it) would shout, "It's about this or that, Father. He was saying . . ."

When the group roared with laughter at a sally from one of them he would smile uncertainly but amiably, glancing from one to the other in complete ignorance of what had passed, but not resenting it. He took to sitting more and more in his kitchen bedroom, smoking a comforting pipe and reading and re-reading the evening paper. During that winter he and Canary, the negro

washerwoman, became quite good friends. She washed down in the basement once a week but came up to the kitchen for her massive lunch. A walrus-waisted black woman, with a rich throaty voice, a rolling eye, and a kindly heart. He actually waited for her appearance above the laundry stairs.

"Well, how's Mist' Minick to-day! Ah nev' did see a gemun spry's you ah fo' yo' age. No, suh! nev' did."

At this rare praise he would straighten his shoulders and waggle his head. "I'm worth any ten of these young sprats to-day." Canary would throw back her head in a loud and companionable guffaw.

Nettie would appear at the kitchen swinging door. "Canary's having her lunch, Father. Don't you want to come into the front room with me? We'll have our lunch in another half-hour."

He followed her obediently enough. Nettie thought of him as a troublesome and rather pathetic child—a child who would never grow up. If she attributed any thoughts to that fine old head they were ambling thoughts, bordering, perhaps, on senility. Little did she know how expertly this old one surveyed her and how ruthlessly he passed judgment. She never suspected the thoughts that formed in the active brain.

He knew about women. He had married a woman. He had had children by her. He looked at this woman—his son's wife—moving about her little five-room flat. She had theories about children. He had heard her expound them. You didn't have them except under such and such circumstances. It wasn't fair otherwise. Plenty of money for their education. Well. He and his wife had had three children. Paul, the second, had died at thirteen. A blow, that had been. They had not always planned for the coming of the three but they always

had found a way, afterward. You managed, somehow, once the little wrinkled red ball had fought its way into the world. You managed. You managed. Look at George! Yet when he was born, thirty-nine years ago, Pa and Ma Minick had been hard put to it.

Sitting there, while Nettie dismissed him as negligible, he saw clearly, grimly. He looked at her. She was plump, but not too short, with a generous width between the hips; a broad full bosom, but firm; round arms and quick slim legs; a fine sturdy throat. The curve between arm and breast made a graceful gracious line . . . Working in a bond office . . . Working in a bond office . . . There was nothing in the Bible about working in a bond office. Here was a woman built for child-bearing.

She thought him senile, negligible.

In March Nettie had in a sewing woman for a week. She had her two or three times a year. A hawk-faced woman of about forty-nine, with a bluebottle figure and a rapacious eye. She sewed in the dining room and there was a pleasant hum of machine and snip of scissors and murmur of conversation and rustle of silky stuff; and hot savoury dishes for lunch. She and old man Minick became great friends. She even let him take out bastings. This when Nettie had gone out from two to four, between fittings.

He chuckled and waggled his head. "I expect to be paid regular assistant's wages for this," he said.

"I guess you don't need any wages, Mr. Minick," the woman said. "I guess you're pretty well fixed."

"Oh, well, I can't complain." (Five hundred a year.)

"Complain! I should say not! If I was to complain it'd be different. Work all day to keep myself; and nobody to come home to at night."

"Widow, ma'am?"

"Since I was twenty. Work, work, that's all I've had. And lonesome! I suppose you don't know what lonesome is."

"Oh, don't I!" slipped from him. He had dropped the bastings.

The sewing woman flashed a look at him from the cold hard eye. "Well, maybe you do. I suppose living here like this, with sons and daughters, ain't so grand, for all your money. Now me, I've always managed to keep my own little place that I could call home, to come back to. It's only two rooms, and nothing to rave about, but it's home. Evenings I just cook and fuss around. Nobody to fuss for, but I fuss, anyway. Cooking, that's what I love to do. Plenty of good food, that's what folks need to keep their strength up." Nettie's lunch that day had been rather scant.

She was there a week. In Nettie's absence she talked against her. He protested, but weakly. Did she give him egg-noggs? Milk? Hot toddy? Soup? Plenty of good rich gravy and meat and puddings? Well! That's what folks needed when they weren't so young any more. Not that he looked old. My, no. Spryer than many young boys, and handsomer than his own son if she did say so.

He fed on it, hungrily. The third day she was flashing meaning glances at him across the luncheon table. The fourth she pressed his foot beneath the table. The fifth, during Nettie's afternoon absence, she got up, ostensibly to look for a bit of cloth which she needed for sewing, and, passing him, laid a caressing hand on his shoulder. Laid it there and pressed his shoulder ever so little. He looked up, startled. The glances across the luncheon had largely passed over his head; the foot be-

neath the table might have been an accident. But this —this was unmistakable. He stood up, a little shakily. She caught his hand. The hawk-like face was close to his.

"You need somebody to love you," she said. "Somebody to do for you, and love you." The hawk face came nearer. He leaned a little toward it. But between it and his face was Ma Minick's face, plump, patient, quizzical, kindly. His head came back sharply. He threw the woman's hot hand from him.

"Woman!" he cried. "Jezebel!"

The front door slammed. Nettie. The woman flew to her sewing. Old man Minick, shaking, went into his kitchen bedroom.

"Well," said Nettie, depositing her bundles on the dining room table, "did you finish that faggoting? Why, you haven't done so very much, have you!"

"I ain't feeling so good," said the woman. "That lunch didn't agree with me."

"Why, it was a good plain lunch. I don't see——"

"Oh, it was plain enough, all right."

Next day she did not come to finish her work. Sick, she telephoned. Nettie called it an outrage. She finished the sewing herself, though she hated sewing. Pa Minick said nothing, but there was a light in his eye. Now and then he chuckled, to Nettie's infinite annoyance, though she said nothing.

"Wanted to marry me!" he said to himself, chuckling. "Wanted to marry me! The old rip!"

At the end of April, Pa Minick discovered Washington Park, and the Club, and his whole life was from that day transformed.

He had taken advantage of the early spring sunshine to take a walk, at Nettie's suggestion.

"Why don't you go into the Park, Father? It's really warm out. And the sun's lovely. Do you good."

He had put on his heaviest shirt, and a muffler, and George's old red sweater with the great white "C" on its front, emblem of George's athletic prowess at the University of Chicago; and over all, his greatcoat. He had taken warm mittens and his cane with the greyhound's head handle, carved. So equipped he had ambled uninterestedly over to the Park across the way. And there he had found new life.

New life in old life. For the park was full of old men. Old men like himself, with greyhound's-head canes, and mufflers and somebody's sweater worn beneath their greatcoats. They wore arctics, though the weather was fine. The skin of their hands and cheek-bones was glazed and had a tight look though it lay in fine little folds. There were splotches of brown on the backs of their hands, and on the temples and forehead. Their heavy grey or brown socks made comfortable folds above their ankles. From that April morning until winter drew on the Park saw old man Minick daily. Not only daily but by the day. Except for his meals, and a brief hour for his after-luncheon nap, he spent all his time there.

For in the park old man Minick and all the old men gathered there found a Forum—a safety valve—a means of expression. It did not take him long to discover that the Park was divided into two distinct sets of old men. There were the old men who lived with their married sons and daughters-in-law or married daughters and sons-in-law. Then there were the old men who lived in the Grant Home for Aged Gentlemen. You saw its fine red-brick façade through the trees at the edge of the Park.

And the slogan of these first was:

"My son and my da'ter they wouldn't want me to live in any public Home. No, sirree! They want me right there with them. In their own home. That's the kind of son and daughter I've got!"

The slogan of the second was:

"I wouldn't live with any son or daughter. Independent. That's me. My own boss. Nobody to tell me what I can do and what I can't. Treat you like a child. I'm my own boss! Pay my own good money and get my keep for it."

The first group, strangely enough, was likely to be spotted of vest and a little frayed as to collar. You saw them going on errands for their daughters-in-law. A loaf of bread. Spool of white No. 100. They took their small grandchildren to the duck pond and between the two toddlers hand in hand—the old and infirm and the infantile and infirm—it was hard to tell which led which.

The second group was shiny as to shoes, spotless as to linen, dapper as to clothes. They had no small errands. Theirs was a magnificent leisure. And theirs was magnificent conversation. The questions they discussed and settled there in the Park—these old men—were not international merely. They were cosmic in scope.

The War? Peace? Disarmament? China? Free love? Mere conversational bubbles to be tossed in the air and disposed of in a burst of foam. Strong meat for old man Minick who had so long been fed on pap. But he soon got used to it. Between four and five in the afternoon, in a spot known as Under The Willows, the meeting took the form of a club—an open forum. A certain group made up of Socialists, Free Thinkers, parlour anarchists, bolshevists, had for years drifted there

to talk. Old man Minick learned high-sounding phrases. "The Masters . . . democracy . . . toil of the many for the good of the few . . . the ruling class . . .free speech . . . the People. . . ."

The strong-minded ones held forth. The weaker ones drifted about on the outskirts, sometimes clinging to the moist and sticky paw of a round-eyed grandchild. Earlier in the day—at eleven o'clock, say—the talk was not so general nor so inclusive. The old men were likely to drift into groups of two or three or four. They sat on sun-bathed benches and their conversation was likely to be rather smutty at times, for all they looked so mild and patriarchal and desiccated. They paid scant heed to the white-haired old women who, like themselves, were sunning in the park. They watched the young women switch by, with appreciative glances at their trim figures and slim ankles. The day of the short skirt was a grand time for them. They chuckled among themselves and made wicked comment. One saw only white-haired, placid, tremulous old men, but their minds still worked with belated masculinity like naughty small boys talking behind the barn.

Old man Minick early achieved a certain leadership in the common talk. He had always liked to hold forth. This last year had been one of almost unendurable bottling up. At first he had timidly sought the less assertive ones of his kind. Mild old men who sat in rockers in the pavilion waiting for lunch time. Their conversation irritated him. They remarked everything that passed before their eyes.

"There's a boat. Fella with a boat."

A silence. Then, heavily: "Yeh."

Five minutes.

"Look at those people laying on the grass. Shouldn't

think it was warm enough for that . . . Now they're getting up."

A group of equestrians passed along the bridle path on the opposite side of the lagoon. They made a frieze against the delicate spring greenery. The coats of the women were scarlet, vivid green, arresting, stimulating.

"Riders."

"Yes."

"Good weather for riding."

A man was fishing near by. "Good weather for fishing."

"Yes."

"Wonder what time it is, anyway." From a pocket, deep-buried, came forth a great gold blob of a watch. "I've got one minute to eleven."

Old man Minick dragged forth a heavy globe. "Mm. I've got eleven."

"Little fast, I guess."

Old man Minick shook off this conversation impatiently. This wasn't conversation. This was oral death, though he did not put it thus. He joined the other men. They were discussing Spiritualism. He listened, ventured an opinion, was heard respectfully and then combated mercilessly. He rose to the verbal fight, and won it.

"Let's see," said one of the old men. "You're not living at the Grant Home, are you?"

"No," old man Minick made reply, proudly. "I live with my son and his wife. They wouldn't have it any other way."

"Hm. Like to be independent myself."

"Lonesome, ain't it? Over there?"

"Lonesome! Say, Mr.—what'd you say your name was? Minick? Mine's Hughes—I never was lonesome

in my life 'cept for six months when I lived with my daughter and her husband and their five children. Yes, sir. That's what I call lonesome, in an eight-room flat."

George and Nettie said, "It's doing you good, Father, being out in the air so much." His eyes were brighter, his figure straighter, his colour better. It was that day he had held forth so eloquently on the immigration question. He had to read a lot—papers and magazines and one thing and another—to keep up. He devoured all the books and pamphlets about bond issues and national finances brought home by George. In the Park he was considered an authority on bonds and banking. He and a retired real-estate man named Mowry sometimes debated a single question for weeks. George and Nettie, relieved, thought he ambled to the Park and spent senile hours with his drooling old friends discussing nothing amiably and witlessly. This while he was eating strong meat, drinking strong drink.

Summer sped. Was past. Autumn held a new dread for old man Minick. When winter came where should he go? Where should he go? Not back to the five-room flat all day, and the little back bedroom, and nothingness. In his mind there rang a childish old song they used to sing at school. A silly song:

> Where do all the birdies go:
> I know. I know.

But he didn't know. He was terror-stricken. October came and went. With the first of November the Park became impossible, even at noon, and with two overcoats and the sweater. The first frost was a black frost for him. He scanned the heavens daily for rain or snow. There was a cigar store and billiard room on the corner

across the boulevard and there he sometimes went, with a few of his Park cronies, to stand behind the players' chairs and watch them at pinochle or rum. But this was a dull business. Besides, the Grant men never came there. They had card rooms of their own.

He turned away from this smoky little den on a drab November day, sick at heart. The winter. He tried to face it, and at what he saw he shrank and was afraid.

He reached the apartment and went around to the rear, dutifully. His rubbers were wet and muddy and Nettie's living-room carpet was a fashionable grey. The back door was unlocked. It was Canary's day downstairs, he remembered. He took off his rubbers in the kitchen and passed into the dining room. Voices. Nettie had company. Some friends, probably, for tea. He turned to go to his room, but stopped at hearing his own name. Father Minick. Father Minick. Nettie's voice.

"Of course, if it weren't for Father Minick I would have. But how can we as long as he lives with us? There isn't room. And we can't afford a bigger place now, with rents what they are. This way it wouldn't be fair to the child. We've talked it over, George and I. Don't you suppose? But not as long as Father Minick is with us. I don't mean we'd use the maid's room for a—for the—if we had a baby. But I'd have to have someone in to help, then, and we'd have to have that extra room."

He stood there in the dining room, quiet. Quiet. His body felt queerly remote and numb, but his mind was working frenziedly. Clearly, too, in spite of the frenzy. Death. That was the first thought. Death. It would be easy. But he didn't want to die. Strange, but he didn't want to die. He liked Life. The Park, the trees, the Club, the talk, the whole show. . . . Nettie

was a good girl . . . The old must make way for the young. They had the right to be born . . . Maybe it was just another excuse. Almost four years married. Why not three years ago? . . . The right to live. The right to live. . . .

He turned, stealthily, stealthily, and went back into the kitchen, put on his rubbers, stole out into the darkening November afternoon.

In an hour he was back. He entered at the front door this time, ringing the bell. He had never had a key. As if he were a child they would not trust him with one. Nettie's women friends were just leaving. In the air you smelled a mingling of perfume, and tea, and cakes, and powder. He sniffed it, sensitively.

"How do you do, Mr. Minick!" they said. "How are you! Well, you certainly look it. And how do you manage these gloomy days?"

He smiled genially, taking off his greatcoat and revealing the red sweater with the big white "C" on it. "I manage. I manage." He puffed out his cheeks. "I'm busy moving."

"Moving!" Nettie's startled eyes flew to his, held them. "Moving, Father?"

"Old folks must make way for the young," he said, gaily. "That's the law of life. Yes, sir! New ones. New ones."

Nettie's face was scarlet. "Father, what in the world ——"

"I signed over at the Grant Home to-day. Move in next week." The women looked at her, smiling. Old man Minick came over to her and patted her plump arm. Then he pinched her smooth cheek with a quizzical thumb and forefinger. Pinched it and shook it ever so little.

"I don't know what you mean," said Nettie, out of breath.

"Yes, you do," said old man Minick, and while his tone was light and jesting there was in his old face something stern, something menacing. "Yes, you do."

When he entered the Grant Home a group of them was seated about the fireplace in the main hall. A neat, ruddy, septuagenarian circle. They greeted him casually, with delicacy of feeling, as if he were merely approaching them at their bench in the Park.

"Say, Minick, look here. Mowry here says China ought to have been included in the four-power treaty. He says——"

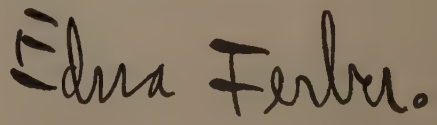
Old man Minick cleared his throat. "You take China, now," he said, "with her vast and practically, you might say, virgin country, why——"

An apple-cheeked maid in a black dress and a white apron stopped before him. He paused.

"Housekeeper says for me to tell you your room's all ready, if you'd like to look at it now."

"Minute. Minute, my child." He waved her aside with the air of one who pays five hundred a year for independence and freedom. The girl turned to go. "Uh —young lady! Young lady!" She looked at him. "Tell the housekeeper two pillows, please. Two pillows on my bed. Be sure."

"Yes, sir. Two pillows. Yes, sir. I'll be sure."



F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

GRETCHEN'S FORTY WINKS

I

THE sidewalks were scratched with brittle leaves and the wind blew the wet laundry stiff on the line. Snow before night, sure. Autumn was over. This, of course, raised the coal question and the Christmas question; but Roger Halsey, standing on his own front porch, announced to the dead suburban sky that he hadn't time for worrying about the weather. Then he let himself hurriedly into the house and left the subject out in the cold twilight.

The hall was dark, but from above he heard the voices of his wife and the nursemaid and the baby in one of their interminable conversations which consisted chiefly of "Don't!" and "Look out, Maxy!" and "Oh, there he *goes!*" punctuated by wild threats and vague bumpings and the recurrent sound of small venturing feet.

Roger turned on the hall light and walked into the living room and turned on the red silk lamp. He put his bulging portfolio on the table, and sitting down rested his intense young face in his hands for a few minutes, shading his eyes carefully from the light. Then he lit a cigarette, squashed it out, and going to the foot of the stairs called for his wife.

"Gretchen!"

"Hello, dear." Her voice was full of laughter. "Come see baby."

He swore softly.

"I can't see baby now," he said aloud. "How long 'fore you'll be down?"

There was a mysterious pause and then a succession of Don'ts and Look out, Maxy's evidently meant to avert some threatened catastrophe.

"How long 'fore you'll be down?" repeated Roger, slightly irritated.

"Oh, I'll be right down."

"How soon?" he shouted.

He had trouble every day at this hour in adapting his voice from the urgent key of the city to the proper casualness for a model home. But tonight he was deliberately impatient. It almost disappointed him when Gretchen came running down the stairs, three at a time, crying, "What is it?" in a rather surprised voice.

They kissed—lingered over it some moments. They had been married three years, and they were much more in love than that implies. It was only seldom that they hated each other with that violent hate of which only young couples are capable, for Roger was still actively sensitive to her beauty.

"Come in here," he said abruptly. "I want to talk to you."

His wife, a bright-colored, Titian-haired girl, vivid as a French rag doll, followed him wonderingly into the living room.

"Listen, Gretchen"—he sat down at the end of the sofa—"beginning with tonight I'm going to—— What's the matter?"

"Nothing. I'm just looking for a cigarette. Go on."

She tiptoed breathlessly back to the sofa and settled at the other end.

"Gretchen ——" Again he broke off. Her hand, palm upward, was extended toward him. "Well, what is it?" he asked wildly.

"Matches."

"What?"

In his impatience it seemed incredible that she should ask for matches, but he fumbled automatically in his pocket.

"Thank you," she whispered. "I didn't mean to interrupt you. Go on."

"Gretch——"

Scratch! The match flared. They exchanged a tense look.

Her fawn's eyes apologized mutely this time and he laughed. After all, she had done no more than light a cigarette; but when he was in this mood her slightest positive action irritated him beyond measure.

"When you've got time to listen," he said crossly, "you might be interested in discussing the poorhouse question with me."

"What poorhouse?" Her eyes were wide, startled; she sat quiet as a mouse.

"That was just to get your attention. But, beginning tonight, I start on what'll probably be the most important six weeks of my life—the six weeks that'll decide whether we're going on forever in this rotten little house in this rotten little suburban town."

Boredom replaced alarm in Gretchen's black eyes. She was a Southern girl and any question that had to do with getting ahead in the world always tended to give her a headache.

"Six months ago I left the New York Lithographic

Company," announced Roger, "and went in the advertising business for myself."

"I know," interrupted Gretchen resentfully; "and now instead of getting six hundred a month sure, we're living on a risky five hundred."

"Gretchen," said Roger sharply, "if you'll just believe in me as hard as you can for six weeks more we'll be rich. I've got a chance now to get some of the biggest accounts in the country." He hesitated. "And for these six weeks we won't go out at all and we won't have anyone here. I'm going to bring home work every night and we'll pull down all the blinds and if anyone rings the doorbell we won't answer."

He smiled airily as if it were a new game they were going to play. Then, as Gretchen was silent, his smile faded and he looked at her uncertainly.

"Well, what's the matter?" she broke out finally. "Do you expect me to jump up and sing? You do enough work as it is. If you try to do any more you'll end up with a nervous breakdown. I read about a——"

"Don't worry about me," he interrupted; "I'm all right But you're going to be bored to death sitting here every evening."

"No, I won't," she said without conviction—"except tonight."

"What about tonight?"

"George Tompkins asked us to dinner."

"Did you accept?"

"Of course I did," she said impatiently. "Why not? You're always talking about what a terrible neighborhood this is and I thought maybe you'd like to go to a nicer one for a change."

"When I go to a nicer neighborhood I want to go for good," he said grimly.

"Well, can we go?"

"I suppose we'll have to if you've accepted."

Somewhat to his annoyance the conversation abruptly ended. Gretchen jumped up and kissed him sketchily and rushed into the kitchen to light the hot water for a bath. With a sigh he carefully deposited his portfolio behind the bookcase—it contained only sketches and layouts for display advertising, but it seemed to him the first thing a burglar would look for. Then he went abstractedly upstairs, dropped into the baby's room for a casual moist kiss and began dressing for dinner.

They had no automobile, so George Tompkins called for them at 6:30. Tompkins was a successful interior decorator and his own house was a sort of intensification of all the houses he had ever designed. He was a broad, rosy man with a handsome mustache and a faint odor of imported perfume. He and Roger had once roomed side by side in a boarding house in New York, but they had met only intermittently in the past five years.

"We ought to see each other more," he told Roger tonight. "You ought to go out more often, old boy. Here, have a cocktail."

"No, thanks."

"No? Well, your beautiful wife will—won't you, Gretchen?"

"I love this house," she exclaimed, taking the glass and looking admiringly at the Chinese tapestry that took up one whole wall of the living room.

"I like it," said Tompkins with satisfaction. "I did it to please myself and I succeeded."

Roger stared moodily around the room.

"You look like the devil, Roger," said his host. "Have a cocktail and cheer up."

"Have one," urged Gretchen.

"What?" Roger turned around absently. "Oh, no, thanks. I've got to work after I get home."

"Work!" Tompkins smiled. "Listen, Roger, you'll kill yourself with work. Why don't you bring a little balance into your life—work a little, then play a little?"

"That's what I tell him," said Gretchen.

"Do you know an average business man's day?" demanded Tompkins as they went in to dinner. "Coffee in the morning, eight hours' work interrupted by a bolted luncheon and then home again with dyspepsia and a bad temper to give the wife a pleasant evening."

Roger laughed shortly.

"You've been going to the movies too much," he said dryly.

"What?" Tompkins looked at him with some irritation. "Movies? I've hardly ever been to the movies in my life. I think the movies are atrocious. My opinions on life are drawn from my own observations. I believe in a balanced life."

"What's that?" demanded Roger.

"Well"—he hesitated—"probably the best way to tell you would be to describe my own day. Would that seem horribly egotistic?"

"Oh, no!" Gretchen looked at him with interest. "I'd love to hear about it."

"Well, in the morning I get up and go through a series of exercises. I've got one room fitted up as a little gymnasium, and I punch the bag and do shadow boxing and weight pulling for an hour. Then after a cold bath ——There's a thing now! Do you take a daily cold bath?"

"No," admitted Roger, "I take a hot bath in the evening three or four times a week."

A horrified silence fell. Tompkins and Gretchen

exchanged glances as if something obscene had been said.

"What's the matter?" broke out Roger, glancing from one to the other in some irritation. "You know I don't take a bath every day—I haven't got the time."

Tompkins gave a prolonged sigh.

"After my bath," he continued, "I have breakfast and drive to my office in New York, where I work until four. Then I lay off, and if it's summer I hurry out here for nine holes of golf, or if it's winter I play squash for an hour at my club. Then a good snappy game of bridge until dinner. Dinner is liable to have something to do with business, but in a pleasant way. Perhaps I've just finished a house for some customer and he wants me to be on hand for his first party to see that the lighting is soft enough and all that sort of thing. Or maybe I sit down with a good book of poetry and spend the evening alone. At any rate, I do something every night to get me out of myself."

"It must be wonderful," said Gretchen enthusiastically. "I wish we lived like that."

Tompkins bent forward earnestly over the table.

"You can," he said impressively. "There's no reason why you shouldn't. Look here, if Roger'll play nine holes of golf every day it'll do wonders for him. He won't know himself. He'll do his work better, never get that tired, nervous feeling—— What's the matter?"

He broke off. Roger had perceptibly yawned.

"Roger," cried Gretchen sharply, "there's no need to be so rude. If you did what George said, you'd be a lot better off." She turned indignantly to their host. "The latest is that he's going to work at night for the next six weeks. He says he's going to pull down the blinds and shut us up like hermits in a cave. He's been doing

it every Sunday for the last year; now he's going to do it every night for six weeks."

Tompkins shook his head sadly.

"At the end of six weeks," he remarked, "he'll be starting for the sanitarium. Let me tell you, every private hospital in New York is full of cases like yours. You just strain the human nervous system a little too far, and bang—you've broken something. And in order to save sixty hours you're laid up sixty weeks for repairs." He broke off, changed his tone and turned to Gretchen with a smile. "Not to mention what happens to you. It seems to me it's the wife rather than the husband who bears the brunt of these insane periods of overwork."

"I don't mind," protested Gretchen loyally.

"Yes, she does," said Roger grimly; "she minds like the devil. She's a shortsighted little egg and she thinks it's going to be forever until I get started and she can have some new clothes. But it can't be helped. The saddest thing about women is that, after all, their best trick is to sit down and fold their hands."

"Your ideas on women are about twenty years out of date," said Tompkins pityingly. "Women won't sit down and wait any more."

"Then they'd better marry men of forty," insisted Roger stubbornly. "If a girl marries a young man for love she ought to be willing to make any sacrifice within reason, so long as her husband keeps going ahead."

"Let's not talk about it," said Gretchen impatiently. "Please, Roger, let's have a good time just this once."

When Tompkins dropped them in front of their house at eleven Roger and Gretchen stood for a moment on the sidewalk looking at the winter moon. There was a fine, damp, dusty snow in the air and Roger drew a long

breath of it and put his arm around Gretchen exultantly.

"I can make more money than he can," he said tensely. "And I'll be doing it in just forty days."

"Forty days," she sighed. "It seems such a long time —when everybody else is always having fun. If I could only sleep for forty days."

"Why don't you, honey? Just take forty winks, and when you wake up everything'll be fine."

She was silent for a moment.

"Roger," she asked thoughtfully, "do you think George meant what he said about taking me horseback riding on Sunday?"

Roger frowned.

"I don't know. Probably not—I hope to heaven he didn't." He hesitated. "As a matter of fact, he made me sort of sore tonight—all that junk about his cold bath."

With their arms about each other, they started up the walk to the house.

"I'll bet he doesn't take a cold bath every morning," continued Roger ruminatively; "or three times a week, either." He fumbled in his pocket for the key and inserted it in the lock with savage precision. Then he turned around defiantly. "I'll bet he hasn't had a bath for a month."

II

After a fortnight of intensive work, Roger Halsey's days blurred into each other and passed by in blocks of twos and threes and fours. From eight until 5:30 he was in his office. Then a half hour on the commuting train, where he scrawled notes on the backs of envelopes under the dull yellow light. By 7:30 his crayons, shears and sheets of white cardboard were spread over the living-

room table and he labored there with much grunting and sighing until midnight, while Gretchen lay on the sofa with a book and the doorbell tinkled occasionally behind the drawn blinds. At twelve there was always an argument as to whether he would come to bed. He would agree to come after he had cleared up everything; but as he was invariably sidetracked by half a dozen new ideas he usually found Gretchen sound asleep when he tiptoed upstairs.

Sometimes it was three o'clock before Roger squashed his last cigarette into the overloaded ash tray, and he would undress in the darkness, hollow as a ghost, but with a sense of triumph that he had lasted out another day.

Christmas came and went and he scarcely noticed that it was gone. He remembered it afterwards as the day he completed the window cards for Garrod's shoes. This was one of the eight large accounts for which he was pointing in January—if he got half of them he was assured a quarter of a million dollars' worth of business during the year.

But the world outside his business became a chaotic dream. He was aware that on three cold December Sundays George Tompkins had taken Gretchen horseback riding and that another time she had gone out with him in his automobile to spend the day skiing on the country-club hill. A picture of Tompkins, in an expensive frame, had appeared one morning on their bedroom wall. And one night he was shocked into a startled protest when Gretchen went to the theater with Tompkins in town.

But his work was almost done. Daily now his layouts arrived from the printers until seven of them were piled and docketed in his office safe. He knew how good they were.

Money alone couldn't buy such work; more than he realized himself, it had been a labor of love.

December tumbled like a dead leaf from the calendar. There was an agonizing week when he had to give up coffee because it made his heart pound so. If he could hold on now for four days—three days——

On Thursday afternoon H. G. Garrod was to arrive in New York. On Wednesday evening Roger came home at seven to find Gretchen poring over the December bills with a strange expression in her eyes.

"What's the matter?"

She nodded at the bills. He ran through them, his brow wrinkling in a frown.

"Gosh!"

"I can't help it," she burst out suddenly. "They're terrible."

"Well, I didn't marry you because you were a wonderful housekeeper. I'll manage about the bills some way. Don't worry your pretty head about it."

She regarded him coldly.

"You talk as if I were a child."

"I have to," he said with sudden irritation.

"Well, at least I'm not a piece of bric-a-brac that you can just put somewhere and forget."

He knelt down by her quickly and took her arms in his hands.

"Gretchen, listen!" he said breathlessly. "For God's sake, don't go to pieces now! We're both all stored up with malice and reproach, and if we had a quarrel it'd be terrible. I love you, Gretchen. Say you love me—quick!"

"You know I love you."

The quarrel was averted, but there was an unnatural tenseness all through dinner. It came to a climax after-

wards when he began to spread his working materials on the table.

"Oh, Roger," she protested, "I thought you didn't have to work tonight."

"I didn't think I'd have to, but something came up."

"I've invited George Tompkins over."

"Oh, gosh!" he exclaimed. "Well, I'm sorry, honey, but you'll have to phone him not to come."

"He's left," she said. "He's coming straight from town. He'll be here any minute now."

Roger groaned. It occurred to him to send them both to the movies, but somehow the suggestion stuck on his lips. He did not want her at the movies; he wanted her here, where he could look up and know she was by his side.

George Tompkins arrived breezily at eight o'clock.

"Aha!" he cried reprovingly, coming into the room. "Still at it."

Roger agreed coolly that he was.

"Better quit—better quit before you have to." He sat down with a long sigh of physical comfort and lit a cigarette. "Take it from a fellow who's looked into the question scientifically. We can stand so much, and then—bang!"

"If you'll excuse me"—Roger made his voice as polite as possible—"I'm going upstairs and finish this work."

"Just as you like, Roger." George waved his hand carelessly. "It isn't that I mind. I'm the friend of the family and I'd just as soon see the missus as the mister." He smiled playfully. "But if I were you, Roger, I'd put away my work and get a good night's sleep."

When Roger had spread out his materials on the bed upstairs he found that he could still hear the rumble and murmur of their voices through the thin floor. He

began wondering what they found to talk about. As he plunged deeper into his work his mind had a tendency to revert sharply to his question, and several times he arose and paced nervously up and down the room.

The bed was ill adapted to his work. Several times the paper slipped from the board on which it rested and the pencil pounced through. Everything was wrong tonight. Letters and figures blurred before his eyes, and as an accompaniment to the beating of his temples came those persistent murmuring voices.

At ten he realized that he had done nothing for more than an hour, and with a sudden exclamation he gathered together his papers, replaced them in his portfolio and went downstairs. They were sitting together on the sofa when he came in.

"Oh, hello!" cried Gretchen, rather unnecessarily, he thought. "We were just discussing you."

"Thank you," he answered ironically. "What particular part of my anatomy was under the scalpel?"

"Your health," said Tompkins jovially.

"My health's all right," answered Roger shortly.

"But you look at it so selfishly, old fella," cried Tompkins. "You only consider yourself in the matter. Don't you think Gretchen has any rights? If you were working on a wonderful sonnet or a—a portrait of some madonna or something"—he glanced at Gretchen's Titian hair—"why, then I'd say go ahead. But you're not. It's just some silly advertisement about how to sell Peptow's hair tonic, and if all the hair tonic ever made was dumped into the ocean tomorrow the world wouldn't be one bit the worse for it."

"Wait a minute," said Roger angrily: "that's not quite fair. I'm not kidding myself about the importance of

my work—it's just as useless as the stuff you do. But to Gretchen and me it's just about the most important thing in the world."

"Are you implying that my work is useless?" demanded Tompkins incredulously.

"No; not if it brings happiness to some poor sucker of a pants manufacturer who doesn't know how to spend his money."

Tompkins and Gretchen exchanged a glance.

"Oh-h-h!" exclaimed Tompkins ironically. "I didn't realize that all these years I've just been wasting my time."

"You're a loafer," said Roger rudely.

"Me?" cried Tompkins angrily. "You call me a loafer because I have a little balance in my life and find time to do interesting things? Because I play hard as well as work hard and do not let myself get to be a dull, tiresome drudge?"

Both men were angry now and their voices had risen, though on Tompkins' face there still remained the semblance of a smile.

"What I object to," said Roger steadily, "is that for the last six weeks you seem to have done all your playing around here."

"Roger!" cried Gretchen. "What do you mean by talking like that?"

"Just what I said."

"You've just lost your temper." Tompkins lit a cigarette with ostentatious coolness. "You're so nervous from overwork you don't know what you're saying. You're on the verge of a nervous break——"

"Shut up!" cried Roger fiercely.

"Calm down, yourself! If you took a cold bath every morning you wouldn't be so excitable."

"You get out of here!" Roger's voice was trembling. "You get out of here right now—before I throw you out!"

Tompkins got angrily to his feet.

"You—you throw me out?" he cried incredulously.

They were actually moving toward each other when Gretchen stepped between them, and grabbing Tompkins' arm urged him toward the door.

"He's acting like a fool, George, but you better get out," she cried, groping in the hall for his hat.

"He insulted me!" shouted Tompkins. "He threatened to throw me out!"

"Never mind, George," pleaded Gretchen. "He doesn't know what he's saying. Please go! I'll see you at ten o'clock to-morrow."

She opened the door.

"You won't see him at ten o'clock to-morrow," said Roger steadily. "He's not coming to this house any more."

Tompkins turned to Gretchen.

"It's his house," he suggested. "Perhaps we'd better meet at mine."

Then he was gone and Gretchen had shut the door behind him. Her eyes were full of angry tears.

"See what you've done!" she sobbed. "The only friend I had, the only person in the world who liked me enough to treat me decently is insulted by my husband in my own house."

She threw herself on the sofa and began to cry passionately into the pillows.

"He brought it on himself," said Roger stubbornly. "I've stood as much as my self-respect will allow. I don't want you going out with him any more."

"I will go out with him!" cried Gretchen wildly. "I'll

go out with him all I want! Do you think it's any fun living here with you?"

"Gretchen," he said coldly, "get up and put on your hat and coat and go out that door and never come back!"

Her mouth fell slightly ajar.

"But I don't want to get out," she said dazedly.

"Well then, behave yourself," and he added in a gentle voice, "I thought you were going to sleep for this forty days."

"Oh, yes," she cried bitterly, "easy enough to say! But I'm tired of sleeping." She got up, faced him defiantly. "And what's more, I'm going riding with George Tompkins tomorrow."

"You won't go out with him if I have to take you to New York and sit you down in my office until I get through."

She looked at him with rage in her eyes.

"I hate you," she said slowly. "And I'd like to take all the work you've done and tear it up and throw it in the fire. And just to give you something to worry about tomorrow, I probably won't be here when you get back."

She got up from the sofa very deliberately, looked at her flushed, tear-stained face in the mirror. Then she ran upstairs and slammed herself in to the bedroom.

Automatically Roger spread out his work on the living-room table. The bright colors of the designs, the vivid ladies—Gretchen had posed for one of them—holding orange ginger ale or glistening silk hosiery, dazzled his mind into a sort of coma. His restless crayon moved here and there over the pictures, shifting a block of letters half an inch to the right, trying a dozen blues for a cool blue, and eliminating the word that made a phrase anæmic and pale. Half an hour passed—he was deep in the work

now; there was no sound in the room but the velvety scratch of the crayon over the glossy board.

After a long while he looked at his watch—it was after three. The wind had come up outside and was rushing by the house corners in loud, alarming swoops, like a heavy body falling through space. He stopped his work and listened. He was not tired now, but his head felt as if it was covered with bulging veins like those pictures that hang in doctors' offices showing a body stripped of decent skin. He put his hands to his head and felt it all over. It seemed to him that on his temple the veins were knotty and brittle around an old scar.

Suddenly he began to be afraid. A hundred warnings he had heard swept into his mind. People did wreck themselves with overwork, and his body and mind were of the same vulnerable and perishable stuff. For the first time he found himself envying George Tompkins' calm nerves and healthy body. He arose and began pacing the room in a panic.

"I've got to sleep," he whispered to himself tensely. "Otherwise I'm going crazy."

He rubbed his hand over his eyes and returned to the table to put up his work, but his fingers were shaking so that he could scarcely grasp the board. The sway of a bare branch against the window made him start and cry out. He sat down on the sofa and tried to think.

"Stop! Stop! Stop!" the clock said. "Stop! Stop! Stop!"

"I can't stop," he answered aloud. "I can't afford to stop."

Listen! Why, there was the wolf at the door now! He could hear its sharp claws scrape along the varnished woodwork. He jumped up, and running to the front

door flung it open; then started back with a ghastly cry. An enormous wolf was standing on the porch, glaring at him with red, malignant eyes. As he watched it the hair bristled on its neck; it gave a low growl and disappeared in the darkness. Then Roger realized with a silent, mirthless laugh that it was the police dog from over the way.

Dragging his limbs wearily into the kitchen, he brought the alarm clock into the living room and set it for seven. Then he wrapped himself in his overcoat, lay down on the sofa and fell immediately into a heavy, dreamless sleep.

When he awoke the light was still shining feebly, but the room was the gray color of a winter morning. He got up, and looking anxiously at his hands found to his relief that they no longer trembled. He felt much better. Then he began to remember in detail the events of the night before, and his brow drew up again in three shallow wrinkles. There was work ahead of him, twenty-fours hours of work; and Gretchen, whether she wanted to or not, must sleep for one more day.

Roger's mind glowed suddenly as if he had just thought of a new advertising idea. A few minutes later he was hurrying through the sharp morning air to Kingsley's drug store.

"Is Mr. Kingsley down yet?"

The druggist's head appeared around the corner of the prescription room.

"Here I am."

"Oh, I wonder if I can talk to you alone."

"Come right back here, Mr. Halsey."

At 7:30, Roger, back home again, walked into his own kitchen. The general housework girl had just arrived and was taking off her hat.

"Bebé"—he was not on familiar terms with her; this was her name—"I want you to cook Mrs. Halsey's breakfast right away. I'll take it up myself."

It struck Bebé that this was an unusual service for so busy a man to render his wife, but if she had seen his conduct when he had carried the tray from the kitchen she would have been even more surprised. For he set it down on the dining-room table and put into the coffee half a teaspoonful of a white substance that was not powdered sugar. Then he mounted the stairs and opened the door of the bedroom.

Gretchen woke up with a start, glanced at the twin bed which had not been slept in and bent on Roger a glance of astonishment which changed to contempt when she saw the breakfast in his hand. She thought he was bringing it as a capitulation.

"I don't want any breakfast," she said coldly, and his heart sank, "except some coffee."

"No breakfast?" Roger's voice expressed disappointment.

"I said I'd take some coffee."

Roger discreetly deposited the tray on a table beside the bed and returned quickly to the kitchen.

"We're going away until tomorrow afternoon," he told Bebé, "and I want to close up the house right now. So you just put on your hat and go home."

He looked at his watch. It was ten minutes to eight and he wanted to catch the 8:10 train. He waited five minutes and then tiptoed softly upstairs and into Gretchen's room. She was sound asleep. The coffee cup was empty save for black dregs and a film of thin brown paste on the bottom. He looked at her rather anxiously, but her breathing was regular and clear.

From the closet he took a suitcase and very quickly

began filling it with her shoes—street shoes, evening slippers, rubber-soled oxfords—he had not realized that she owned so many pairs. When he closed the suitcase it was bulging.

He hesitated a minute, took a pair of sewing scissors from a box and following the telephone wire until it went out of sight behind the dresser, severed it in one neat clip. He jumped as there was a soft knock at the door. It was the nursemaid. He had forgotten her existence.

"Mrs. Halsey and I are going up to the city till tomorrow," he said glibly.

Back in the room, a wave of pity passed over him. Gretchen seemed suddenly lovely and helpless, sleeping there. It was somehow terrible to rob her young life of a day. He touched her hair with his fingers, and as she murmured something in her dream he leaned over and kissed her bright cheek. Then he picked up the suitcase full of shoes, locked the door and ran briskly down the stairs.

III

By five o'clock that afternoon the last package of cards for Garrod's shoes had been sent by messenger to H. G. Garrod at the Biltmore Hotel. He was to give some sort of decision by nine o'clock next morning. At 5:30 Roger's stenographer tapped him on the shoulder.

"Here's Mr. Golden, the superintendent of the building, to see you."

Roger turned around dazedly.

"Oh, how do?"

Mr. Golden came directly to the point. If Mr. Halsey intended to keep the office any longer the little oversight about the rent had better be remedied right away.

"Mr. Golden," said Roger wearily, "everything'll be all right tomorrow. If you worry me now maybe you'll never get your money. After tomorrow nothing'll matter."

Mr. Golden looked at the tenant uneasily. Young men sometimes did away with themselves when business went wrong. Then his eye fell unpleasantly on the initialed suitcase beside the desk.

"Going on a trip?" he asked pointedly.

"What? Oh, no. That's just some clothes."

"Clothes, eh? Well, Mr. Halsey, just to prove that you mean what you say, suppose you let me keep that suitcase until tomorrow noon."

"Help yourself."

Mr. Golden picked it up with a deprecatory gesture.

"Just a matter of form," he remarked.

"I understand," said Roger, swinging around to his desk. "Good afternoon."

Mr. Golden seemed to feel that the conversation should close on a softer key.

"And don't work too hard, Mr. Halsey. You don't want to have a nervous break——"

"No," shouted Roger, "I don't. But I will if you don't leave me alone."

As the door closed behind Mr. Golden, Roger's stenographer turned sympathetically around.

"You shouldn't have let him get away with that," she said. "What's in there? Clothes?"

"No," answered Roger absently. "Just all my wife's shoes."

He slept in the office that night on a sofa beside his desk. At dawn he awoke with a nervous start, rushed out into the street for coffee and returned in ten minutes in a panic—afraid that he might have missed Mr. Garrod's telephone call. It was then 6:30.

By eight o'clock his whole body seemed to be on fire, When his two artists arrived he was stretched on the couch in almost physical pain. The phone rang imperatively at 9:30 and he picked up the receiver with trembling hands.

"Hello."

"Is this the Halsey agency?"

"Yes, this is Mr. Halsey speaking."

"This is Mr. H. G. Garrod."

Roger's heart stopped beating.

"I called up, young fellow, to say that this is wonderful work you've given us here. We want all of it and as much more as your office can do."

"Oh, God!" cried Roger into the transmitter.

"What?" Mr. H. G. Garrod was considerably startled. "Say, wait a minute there!"

But he was talking to nobody. The phone had clattered to the floor and Roger, stretched full length on the couch, was sobbing as if his heart would break.

IV

Three hours later, his face somewhat pale, but his eyes calm as a child's, Roger opened the door of his wife's bedroom with the morning paper under his arm. At the sound of his footsteps she started awake.

"What time is it?" she demanded.

He looked at his watch.

"Twelve o'clock."

Suddenly she began to cry.

"Roger," she said brokenly, "I'm sorry I was so bad last night."

He nodded coolly.

"Everything's all right now," he said. Then, after a pause, "I've got the account—the first one."

She turned toward him quickly.

"You have?" Then, after a minute's silence, "Can I get a new dress?"

"Dress?" He laughed shortly. "You can get a dozen. This account alone will bring us in forty thousand a year. It's one of the biggest in the West."

She looked at him, startled.

"Forty thousand a year!"

"Yes."

"Gosh"—and then faintly—"I didn't know it'd really be anything like that." Again she thought a minute. "We can have a house like George Tompkins'."

"I want a home—not an interior-decoration shop."

"Forty thousand a year!" she repeated again, and then added softly, "Oh, Roger——"

"Yes?"

"I'm not going out with George Tompkins."

"I wouldn't let you," he said shortly, "even if you wanted to."

She made a show of indignation.

"Why, I've had a date with him for this Thursday for weeks."

"It isn't Thursday."

"It is."

"It's Friday."

"Why, Roger, you must be crazy! Don't you think I know what day it is?"

"It isn't Thursday," he said stubbornly. "Look!" And he held out the morning paper.

"Friday!" she exclaimed. "Why, this is a mistake! This must be last week's paper. Today's Thursday."

She closed her eyes and thought for a moment.

"Yesterday was Wednesday," she said decisively. "The laundress came yesterday. I guess I know."

"Well," he said smugly, "look at the paper. There isn't any question about it."

With a bewildered look on her face she got out of bed and began searching for her clothes. Roger went into the bathroom to shave. A minute later he heard the springs creak again. Gretchen was getting back into bed.

"What's the matter?" he inquired, putting his head around the corner of the bathroom.

"I'm scared," she said in a trembling voice. "I think my nerves are giving away. I can't find any of my shoes."

"Your shoes? Why, the closet's full of them."

"I know, but I can't see one." Her face was pale with fear. "Oh, Roger!"

Roger came to her bedside and put his arm around her.

"Oh, Roger," she cried, "what's the matter with me? First that newspaper and now all my shoes. Take care of me, Roger."

"I'll get the doctor," he said.

He walked remorselessly to the telephone and took up the receiver.

"Phone seems to be out of order," he remarked after a minute; "I'll send Bebé."

The doctor arrived in ten minutes.

"I think I'm on the verge of a collapse," Gretchen told him in a strained voice.

Doctor Gregory sat down on the edge of the bed and took her wrist in his hand.

"It seems to be in the air this morning."

"I got up," said Gretchen in an awed voice, "and I found that I'd lost a whole day. I had an engagement to go riding with George Tompkins——"

"What?" exclaimed the doctor in surprise. Then he laughed.

"George Tompkins won't go riding with anyone for many days to come."

"Has he gone away?" asked Gretchen curiously.

"He's going West."

"Why?" demanded Roger. "Is he running away with somebody's wife?"

"No," said Doctor Gregory. "He's had a nervous breakdown."

"What?" they exclaimed in unison.

"He just collapsed like an opera hat in his cold shower."

"But he was always talking about his—his balanced life," gasped Gretchen. "He was always warning Roger about overstrain. He had it on his mind."

"I know," said the doctor. "He's been babbling about it all morning. I think it's driven him a little mad. He worked pretty hard at it, you know."

"At what?" demanded Roger in bewilderment.

"At keeping his life balanced." He turned to Gretchen. "Now all I'll prescribe for this lady here is a good rest. If she'll just stay around the house for a few days and take forty winks of sleep she'll be as fit as ever. She's been under some strain."

"Doctor," exclaimed Roger hoarsely, "don't you think I'd better have a rest or something? I've been working pretty hard lately."

"You!" Doctor Gregory laughed, slapped him violently on the back. "My boy, I never saw you looking better in your life."

Roger turned around quickly to conceal his smile—winked forty times, or almost forty times, at the autographed picture of Mr. George Tompkins, which hung slightly askew on the bedroom wall.

F. Scott Fitzgerald

ZONA GALE

EXIT CHARITY[1]

"YES, sir," said Silas Skyes, "we got to get some charity going in this town."

"Charity," I says over, meditative. "How do you mean, Silas?"

"How do I mean?" says Silas snappy. "Don't you know your Bible, woman?"

"I ain't so sure I do as I use' to be," I told him. "I use' to think charity was givin' things away. Then I had a spell I use' to think it was coverin' up their faults. Now I dunno as I'm clear what it is."

Silas bridled some and snorted soft.

"Charity," says he, "charity, Calliope Marsh, is doin' things for folks."

"Doin' things for folks," I says over. I took up my pound of prunes and went out the post-office store, thoughtful.

Outside on the walk, I come on Absalom. He stood kicking his heels on the hydrant and looking up and down the street like he was waiting for something that there wasn't any such thing, and he knew it. Absalom Ricker he was, that has work in the canning factory, when any. I'd been wantin' to see him.

"Evenin', Ab," says I. "How's Gertie?"

"She ain't on her feet yet," says he, rueful.

[1] From *Neighborhood Stories*, copyright, 1914, by The Macmillan Company.

"How's your mother's rheumatism?"

"It ain't in her fingers yet," says he, bright.

"How're you?"

"Oh, me!" he says. "I'm rosy."

"Your arm," says I; "will it let you go to work yet?"

"Not yet," he says, "the thermometer actin' up zero, so. But still, I'm rosy—rosy."

"Well," says I, "bein' you're more rosy than busy, I wonder if you couldn't do something for us ladies. You know," I says, "that nice new, galvanized iron garbage tank us ladies bought and run one season, collectin' up garbage? Well, I dunno but what we've got to sell it, the Council refusin' to run it, 'count of economy. And I wondered if you'd go and hev a look at it, and tell us what we'd ought to get for it, and where."

"Why, sure I will," says Absalom. "I'd be glad," says he, kind of pleasant and important, "to accommodate."

He went off down the street, walking sidewise like he does, his coat and beard blowing out the same side, his pockets sagging till they looked like mouths smiling, and his hat trained up to a peak. Everybody liked Absalom—he had such a nice, one-sided smile and he seemed to be so afraid he was going to hurt your feelings. He'd broke his right arm in Silas's canning factory that fall, and he'd been laying off ever since. His wife done washings, and his mother finished vests from the city, and the children stuffed up cracks in the walls and thought it was a game.

They was others in the town, come lately, and mostly in the factory, that was the same way; the Bettses and the Doles and the Haskitts and the Hennings. They lived in little shacks around, and the men worked in the canning factory and the gas-works and on the tracks,

and the women helped out. And one or two of 'em had took down ill; and so it was Silas, that likes to think of things first, that up and said "do something." And it was him put the notice in the papers a few nights later to all citizens that's interested in forming a Charity Society to meet in Post-Office Hall that he has the renting of.

I was turning in the stairway to the hall that night when I heard somebody singing. And coming down the walk, with her hat on crooked and its feather broke, was old Bess Bones. Bess has lived in Friendship Village for years—and I always thought it was real good for the town that she done so. For she is the only woman I ever knew of that ain't respectable and yet that goes to everybody's home without being either rich or famous.

She does cleaning and scrubbing, and we all like to get her to do it, she does it so thoroughly conscientious. She brings us in little remedies she knows about and vegetables from her own garden, and eggs. Sometimes some of us asks her to set down to a meal. Once she brought me a picked chicken of hers. And it's good for Friendship Village because we all see she's human, and mostly with women like that we build a thick wall and don't give 'em a chance to even knock out a brick ever after.

"I was just goin' to see you, Miss Marsh," she says. "I got kind o' lonesome and I thought I'd bring you over a begonia slip and set a while."

"I'm sorry, Bess," I says. "I'm going to a meeting."

"What kind of meeting?" she says. "P'litical?"

"Yes," I says, "something like that." And that was true, of course, being politics is so often carried on by private charity from the candidates.

"I'd kind of like to go to a meeting again," she says,

wistful. "I sung to revival meetings for a month once, when I was a girl."

"I guess you wouldn't like this one," I says. "Come to see me to-morrow and I'll tell you about it."

And then I went upstairs and left her standing there on the sidewalk, and I felt kind of ashamed and sneaking. I didn't know why. But I says to myself, comforting, that she'd probably of broke out and sung in the middle of the meeting, if she had come. Her head ain't right, like the most of ours; but hers takes noisy forms, so you notice more.

Eleven of us turned out to the meeting, which was a pretty good proportion, there being only fifteen hundred living in Friendship Village altogether. Silas was in the chair, formal as a funeral.

"The idear as I understand it," says Silas, when the meeting was opened, "is to get some Charity going. We'd ought to organize."

"And then what?" asks Mis' Toplady.

"Why, commence distributin' duds and victuals," says Silas.

"Well-a," says Mis' Toplady, "and keep on distributing them all our lives?"

"Sure," says Silas, "unless you're goin' to be weary in well-doing. Them folks'll keep right on being hungry and nekked as long as they live."

"Why will they?" says Mis' Toplady, puzzled.

"Well, they're poor folks, ain't they?" says Silas, scowling.

"Why, yes," says Mis' Toplady, "but that ain't all they is to 'em, is it?"

"What do you mean?" says Silas.

"Why, I mean," says Mis' Toplady, "can't they be got goin' so's they shan't be poor folks?"

Silas used his face like he smelled something. "Don't you know no more about folks than that?" says he. "Facts is facts. You've got to take folks as they are."

"But you ain't taking folks nowheres. You're leavin' 'em as they are, Silas," says Mis' Toplady, troubled.

Mis' Silas Sykes spoke up with her way of measuring off just enough for everybody.

"It's this way Silas means," she says. "Folks are rich, or medium, or poor. We've got to face that. It's always been so."

Mis' Toplady kind of bit at her lower lip a few times in a way she has, that wrinkles up her nose meditative. "It don't follow out," she says, firm. "My back yard used to be all chickweed. Now it's pure potatoes."

"Folks," says Mis' Sykes, real witherin', "folks ain't dirt."

"That's what I thought," says Mis' Toplady, dry.

Silas went right over their heads, like he does.

"We've all been doin' what we could for these folks," he says, "but we ain't been doin' it real wise. It's come to my notice that the Haskitts had four different chickens give to 'em last Christmas. What we want to do is to fix up some sort of a organization so's our chickens won't lap."

"Well," says Timothy Toplady, "then let's organize. That ain't hard. I move it be done."

It was done, and Silas was made president, like he ever loves to be, and Timothy treasurer, and me secretary, because they could get me to take it.

"Now," says Silas, "let's get down to work and talk over cases."

"Cases!" says Mis' Toplady, distasteful. "They ain't got the smallpox, have they? Say folks."

"I guess you ain't very used to Charity societies,"

says Silas, tolerant. "Take the Haskitts. They ain't got a pane o' glass in their house."

"Nor no wood, much," says Timothy. "When I went to get the rent the cat was asleep on the cook-stove."

"What rent do they give you, Timothy?" says Silas.

"Five dollars," he says, pursin' his lips.

"That's only three per cent on the money. I don't see how you can afford it."

"I am indulgin' myself a little," Timothy admits. "But I been thinkin' o' raisin' it to six. One thing, though; I ain't give 'em any repairs. If I'd had a six-dollar family in there I'd had to fix the window-glass and cleaned out the cistern and mended the roof. It about evens itself up."

"Yes," says Silas, agreeful, "I guess it does. Well, they can have some boxes to burn, out of the store. I'll take 'em on my list. You can't go givin' 'em truck, Timothy. If you do, they'll come down on to you for repairs. Now the Rickers. . . ."

Abigail Arnold spoke up. "They're awful," she says. "Mis' Ricker ain't fit to wash, and the children just show through. Ab's arm won't let him work all winter."

"You take him, Silas," says Timothy. "He's your own employee."

Silas shakes his head. "He's been chasing me for damages ever since he got hurt," he says.

"Ain't he going to get any, Silas?" says Mis' Toplady, pitiful.

"Get any?" says Silas. "It was his own fault. He told me a week before about them belts being worn. I told him to lay off till I could fix 'em. But no—he kep' right on. Said his wife was sick and his bills was eatin' him up. He ain't nobody to blame but his own carelessness. I told him to lay off."

I looked over to Mis' Toplady, and she looked over to me. And I looked at Abigail and at Mis' Holcomb, and we all looked at each other. Only Mis' Sykes—she sat there listenin' and lookin' like her life was just elegant.

"Can't you take that case, Mis' Toplady?" says Silas.

"I'll go and see them folks," she says troubled. And I guess us ladies felt troubled, one and all. And so on during all the while we was discussing the Doles and the Hennings and the Bettses and the rest. And when the meeting was over we four hung around the stove and Mis' Sykes too.

"I suppose it's all right," Mis' Toplady says. "I s'pose it is. But I feel like we'd made a nice, new apron to tie on to Friendship Village, and hadn't done a thing about its underclothes."

"I'm sure," says Mis' Sykes, looking hurt for Silas that had cut out the apron, "I'm sure I don't see what you mean. Faith, Hope and Charity, and the greatest of these is Charity. Does that mean what it says or don't it?"

"Oh, I suppose it does," says Mis' Toplady. "But what I think is this: Ain't there things that's greater than the whole three as most folks mean 'em?"

Mis' Sykes, she sort of gasped, in three hitches. "Will you tell me what?" she says as mad as if she'd been faith, hope and charity personally.

"I dunno . . ." says Mis' Toplady, dreamy, "I dunno the name of it. But ladies, it's something. And I can feel it just as plain as plain."

It was three-four weeks before the new Charity Association got really to running, and had collected in enough clothes and groceries so's we could start distributing. On the day before the next monthly meeting, that was to be in Post-Office Hall again, we started out

with the things, so's to make our report to the meeting. Mis' Toplady and I was together, and the first place we went to was Absalom Ricker's. Gertie, Absalom's wife, was washing, and he was turning the wringer with his well hand, and his mother was finishing vests by the stove and singing a tune that was all on a straight line and loud. And the children one and all was crying, in their leisure from fighting each other.

"Well," says Mis' Toplady, "how you getting on now? Got many washings to do?"

Gertie Ricker, she set down on the wood-box all of a sudden and begun to cry. She was a pretty little woman, but sickly, and with one of them folding spines that don't hold their folks up very good.

"I've got three a week," she says. "I can earn the rent all right."

"I tell her," says Absalom, "if she didn't have no washings then there'd be something to cry for."

But he said it sort of lack-luster, and like it come a word at a time.

"Do you get out any?" says Mis' Toplady, to improve the topic.

"Out where?" says Gertie. "We ain't no place to go. I went down for the yeast last night."

It kind of come over me: Washing all day and her half-sick; Absalom by the fire and turning wringer; his old mother humming on one note; the children yelling when they wasn't shouting. I thought of her cupboard and I could see what it must hold: cold boiled potatoes and beans, I bet. I thought of their supper table . . . of early mornings before the fire was built. And I see the kind of a life they have.

And then I looked over to the two loaves of bread and the can of fruit and the dozen eggs and the old coat of

Timothy's that we'd brought, and it seemed to me that these touched the spot of what was the trouble in that house about as much as the smoke that oozed into the room from the chimney. And I glanced over to Mis' Toplady and there she set, with ideas filtering back of her eyes.

"We've brought you a few things, being you're sick—" she begun, sort of embarrassed; but Absalom, he cut in short, shorter than I ever knew him to speak.

"Who's *we?*" he says.

"Why-a," says Mis' Toplady, stumbling some over her words, "the new society."

Absalom flushed up to the roots of his hair. "What society?" says he, sharp.

Mis' Toplady showed scairt for just a minute, and then she met his eyes brave. "Why," she says, "us—and you. You belong to it. We had it in the paper, and met to the Post-Office Hall the other night. It's for everybody to come to."

"To do what?" says Absalom.

"Why—a" says Mis' Toplady, some put to it, "to—do nice things for—each other."

"The town?" says Absalom.

"The town," agrees Mis' Toplady—and pressed ahead almost like she was finding some things to explain with. "We meet again to-morrow night," says she. "Couldn't you come,—you and Gertie? Come—and mebbe belong?"

Absalom's mad cooled down some. First he looked sheepish and then he showed pleased. "Why, I dunno—could we, Gertie?" he says.

"Is it dress-up?" says Gertie.

"Mercy, no," says Mis' Toplady, "it's everyday. Or not so much so. You'll come, won't you?"

"Mebbe," says Gertie.

When we got outside, I looked at Mis' Toplady, kind of took aback; and it was so that she looked at me.

"Silas'll talk charity his way to that meeting, you know," I says. "I'm afraid he'll hurt Absalom and Gertie. I'm afraid. . . ."

Mis' Toplady looked kind of scairt herself. "I done that before I meant to do it no more'n nothing in this world," she says, "but I dunno—when I begun handin' 'em out stuff I was ashamed to do it without putting it like I done."

"I know," I says, "I know." And know I did. I've give things to poor folks lots of times and glowed up my spine with a virtuous feeling—but something big was always setting somewhere inside me making me feel ashamed of the glow and ashamed of the giving. Who am I that I should be the giver, and somebody else the givee?

We went to the Bettses' and caught Mis' Betts washing up two days' of dishes at four o'clock in the afternoon, and we heard about Joe's losing his job, and we talked to the canary. "We'd ought not to afford him," Mis' Betts says, apologetic. "I always hate to take the money to get him another package of seed—and we ain't much of any crumbs."

And we went to the Haskitts' and found her head tied up with the toothache. Folks looks sick enough with their heads tied up around; but when it comes to up and down, with the ends sticking up, they always look like they were going to die. And we went to the Doles' and the Hennings' and carried in the stuff; and one and all them places, leaving things there was like laying a ten-cent piece down on a leper, and bowing to him to help

on his recovery. And every single place, as soon as ever we'd laid down the old clothes we'd brought, we invited 'em to join the organization and to come to the meeting next night.

"What's the name of this here club?" Joe Betts asks us.

By that time neither Mis' Toplady nor me would have tied the word "Charity" to that club for anything on earth. We told him we was going to pick the name next night, and told him he must come and help.

"Do come," Mis' Toplady says, and when Mis' Betts hung off: "We're goin' to have a little visiting time—and coffee and sandwiches afterwards," Mis' Toplady adds, calm as her hat. And when we got outside: "I dunno what made me stick on the coffee and the sandwiches," she says, sort of dazed, "but it was so kind of bleak and dead in there, I felt like I just had to say something cheerful and human—like coffee."

"Well," I says, "us ladies can do the refreshments ourselves, so be the rest of the Board stands on its head at the idee of doing 'em itself. As I presume likely it will stand."

And this we both of us presumed alike. So on the way home we stopped in to the post-office store and told Silas that we'd been giving out a good many invitations to folks to come to the meeting next night, and mebbe join.

"That's good," says Silas, genial; "that's good. We need the dues."

"We kind of thought coffee and sandwiches to-morrow night, Silas," says Mis' Toplady, experimental, "and a little social time."

"Don't you go to makin' no white-kid glove doin's out o' this thing," says Silas. "You can't mix up charity

and society too free. Charity's religion and society's earthy. And that's two different things."

"Earthy," I says over. "Earthy! So'm I. Ain't it a wonderful word, Silas? Well, us two is going to do the coffee and sandwiches for to-morrow night," I added on, deliberate, determined and serene.

When Silas had done his objecting, and see he couldn't help himself with us willing to solicit the whole refreshments, and when we'd left the store, Mis' Toplady thought of something else: "I dunno," she says, "as we'd ought to leave folks out just because they ain't poor. That," she says, troubled, "don't seem real right. Let's us telephone to them we can think of that didn't come to the last meeting."

So we invited in the telephone population just the same as them that didn't have one.

The next night us ladies got down to the hall early to do the finishing touches. And on Daphne Street, on my way down, I met Bess Bones again, kind of creeping along. She'd stopped to pat the nose of a horse standing patient, hitched outside the barber-shop saloon—I've seen Bess go down Daphne Street on market-days patting the nose of every horse one after another.

"Hello, Mis' Marsh," says Bess. "Are you comin' down with another meeting?"

"Yes, sir, Bess," I says, "I am." And then a thought struck me. "Bess," I says—able now to hold up my head like my skull intended, because I felt I could ask her—"you come on up too—you're invited to-night. Everybody is."

Her face lit up, like putting the curtain up.

"Honest, can I?" she says. "I'd love to go to a meeting again—I've looked in the window at 'em a dozen times. I'll get my bread and be right up."

I tell you, Post-Office Hall looked nice. We'd got in a few rugs and plants, and the refreshment table stood acrost one corner, with a screen around the gas-plate, and the cups all piled shiny and the sandwiches covered with white fringed napkins. And about seven o'clock in come three pieces of Friendship Village Stonehenge Band we'd got to give their services, and they begun tuning up, festive. And us ladies stood around with our hands under our white aprons; and you'd have thought it was some nice, human doings instead of just duty.

Before much of anybody else had got there, in come them we'd invited first; Absalom Ricker and Gertie, her looking real nice with a new-ironed bow to her neck, and him brushed up in Timothy's old coat and his hair trained to a high peak. And the Bettses—Joe with his beard expected to cover up where there wasn't a necktie and her pretending the hall was chilly so's to keep her cloak on over whatever wasn't underneath. And the Haskitts, him snapping and snarling at her, and her trying to hush him up by agreeing with him promiscuous. And Mis' Henning, but her husband didn't show up. We heard afterwards that he was down in the barber shop saloon, dressed up to come but backed out after. And most everybody else come—not only the original eleven, but some of the telephone folks, and some that the refreshment-bait always catches.

Silas come in late—he'd had to wait and distribute the mail—and when he see the Rickers and the rest of them, he come tearing over to us women in the refreshment corner.

"My dum," he says, "look at them folks setting down there—Rickerses and Henningses and Bettses and them—how are we going to manage with them here? The idear of their coming to the meetin'."

"Ain't it some their meeting, Silas?" I says. "The whole society was formed on their account. Seems to me they've got a right—just like in real United States Congress doings."

"But, my dum, woman," says Silas, "how we going to take up their cases and talk them over with them setting there, taking it all in? Ain't you got no delicacy to you?" he ends up, ready to burst.

And of course, when you come to think of it, Congress always does do its real business in committees, private and delicate.

Mis' Toplady was ready for Silas.

"You're right about it," she says. "We can't do that, can we? Suppose we don't do so very much business to-night? Let's set some other talk going. We thought maybe—do you s'pose your niece would sing for us, Silas?"

"Maybe," says Silas, some mollified through being proud to sinning of his visiting niece: "But I don't like this here—" he was going on—"Ask her," says Mis' Toplady. "She'll do it for you, Silas." And Silas done so, ignorant as the dead that he'd been right down managed. Then he went up stage and rapped to begin.

Well, of course I had to read the minutes, being secretary so, and I was ready, having set up half the night before to make them out. And of course the job was some delicate one, but I'd fixed them up what I thought was real nice and impersonal. Like this.

"A meeting of the citizens of Friendship Village was held, —, in Post Office Hall, for the purpose of organizing a society to do nice things for folks. (Then I gave the names of the officers.) Several plans were thought over for making presents to others and for distributing

the same. Several families was thought of for membership. It was voted to have two kinds of members, honorary and active. The active pay all the dues and provide all the presents, but everybody contributes what they can and will, whether work or similar. A number of ways was thought of for going to work. Things that had ought to be done was talked over. It was decided to hold monthly meetings. Meeting adjourned."

This seemed to me to cover everything real neat, nobody ever paying much attention to the minutes anyway. I suppose that's why they give them such a small stingy name. And when Silas got to reports of Committees, Mis' Toplady was no less ready for him. She hopped right up to say that the work that had been put in her hands were finished, the same as was ordered and no more to be said about it. And when it come to Unfinished Business, there was me on my feet again to say that the work that had been put in my hands wasn't finished and there'd be more to be said about it later.

When Silas asked for New Business, there was a pause. And all of a sudden Absalom Ricker got on to his feet with his arm still in its sling.

"Mr. President," he says, so nice and dignified. And when Silas had done his nod, Absalom went on in his soft unstarched voice: "It's a real nice idear," he says, "to get up this here club, I for one feel real glad it's going. You ain't got up any line around it. Nobody had to be any one thing to order to get in on it. I've thought for a long time there'd ought to be some place where folks could go that didn't believe alike, nor vote alike, nor get paid alike. I'm glad I come out—I guess we all are. Now the purpose of this here club, as I understand it, is to do nice things for folks. Well, I've

got a nice thing to propose to do. I'll pitch in and help, and I guess some of the rest of us could get a-hold of that elegant galvanized iron swill-wagon that ain't in use and drive it around the town to do what it's for. Us that don't have work so awful steady could do it, nice as a mice. I dunno whether that comes inside what the club was intended for, but it would be doing a kind of a nice thing for folks, my way of thinking."

Up hopped Eppleby Holcomb—Eppleby being one of those prophet men that can see faint signs sticking up their heads where there ain't much of anything showing.

"That's the ticket, Mr. President," says he. "Us that don't have horses can sense that all right. If Absalom moves it, I second it."

"Will you help drive it around, Betts?" says Absalom. "Hank Haskitt? Ben Dole? We're all of us home a good deal of the time—we could keep it goin', amongst us. All right," says he, when the men had nodded matter-of-course nods, sure I make it a motion."

Silas put the motion, looking some dazed. And when it carried, hearty, us ladies sitting over by the refreshment table, and that had bought the wagon, we all burst out and spatted our hands. We couldn't help it. And everybody kind of turned around and passed some remarks—and made a real nice minute.

Then Silas spoke up from the chair kind of sour—being in the Council so, that wouldn't run the wagon.

"The thing's in the city tool-house now," says he, "and it's a good deal in the way where it is. It had ought to be put somewheres."

Up pipes Ben Dole, kind of important and eager, and forgot to address the chair till he was half through, and then done so and ducked and flushed and went on any-

how. And the purport of his remarks was, that he could set that tank in the barn on his lot, that he didn't have no horse for and no use of, and keep it there till spring. And I seconded what he meant, and it got itself carried, and Ben set down like he'd done a thing, same as he had done.

Then, when Silas said what was the next pleasure of the meeting, Mis' Toplady mentioned that they needed carpet rags to make up some rugs for two-three places, and who could give some and help sew them? Mis' Sykes said she could, and Mame and Abigail and me and some more offered up, and Mis' Toplady wrote our names down, and "How about you, Gertie?" says she to Gertie Ricker.

Gertie looked scairt for a minute, and then my heart jumped pleasant in its socket, *for I see Absalom nudge* her. Yes, sir, he nudged her to say she would, and all of a sudden I knew that he wanted his wife to be taking some part like the rest was; and she says, faint, "I guess so." And when Mis' Sykes asked round, Mis' Haskitt and Mis' Henning said they didn't have much of any rags, but they could come and help sew the rags of them that did have.

"So do," says Mis' Toplady, hearty, "and we'll meet to my house next Tuesday at two o'clock, shan't we? And have a cup o' tea."

"What else is the pleasure of the meeting?" says Silas, balancing on his toes as chairman-like as he knew how.

Then on the second row from the back, who should we see getting up but Bess Bones. I hadn't seen her come in and I'd forgot all about her. Her hat was on one side, and the plume that was broke in the middle was hanging idle, not doing any decorating; and I could see the other ladies thinking with one brain that ten to one

she'd been drinking, and would break out singing in our very midst. But she hadn't nor she didn't. Only what she said went over.

"For land's sakes," says Bess, "if you're goin' to hold protracted meetin's in this hall, why don't you clean up the floor? I never see such a hole. I motion I come in an' scrub it up. I ain't no thousand dollars to subscribe, but a cake o' soap'll keep you from stickin' to the boards."

"Second the motion!" says I, all over me. And even Silas broke down and smiled like he don't think no president had ought to do. And everybody else kind of laughed and looked at each other and felt the kind of a feeling that don't run around among folks any too often. And when Silas put the motion, kind of grudging, we all voted for it abundant. And Bess set there showing pleased, like an empty room that has had a piece of furniture got it.

I dunno what it was that minute done to us all. I've often wondered since, what it was. But somehow everybody kind of felt that they all couldn't rightly name it. Ab and Joe Betts, Mame Holcomb and Eppleby, Gertie and Mis' Toplady and me—we all felt it. Everybody did, unless it was Silas and Mis' Sykes. Silas didn't sense nothing much but that he hoped the meeting was going to run smooth, and Mis' Sykes—well, right in the middle of that glowing minute I see her catch sight of Mame Holcomb's new red waist and she set there thinking of nothing *but* waist either with eyes or with mind.

But the rest of us was sharing a big minute. And I liked us all to be feeling that way—I ain't never liked anything better, without it's the Christmas feeling or the Thanksgiving feeling. And this feeling was sort of like all two. And I betted if only we could make it last—Absalom wouldn't be getting done out of his arm's money-

value by Silas, nor the Bettses out of their decent roof by Timothy nor they wouldn't be no club formed to dole out charity stuff, but we would all know a better way. And things would be different. Different.

I leaned clear past three chairs and nudged Mis' Toplady. She looked round, and I see she was just wiping her eyes on her apron-string—Mis' Toplady never can find her handkerchief when she most wants to cry. And I never said a word—I didn't need to—but we nodded and we both knew what we both knew: that there was a bigger thing in the room that minute than ever Silas knew or guessed when he planned out his plan. And it was what Mis' Toplady had meant when she told him there was something "greater than these"—as most folks meant 'em.

I didn't lose the feeling through the piece by the band that come next, nor through the selection by Silas's niece. The music really made the feeling more so—the music, and our all setting there hearing it together, and everybody in the room being givers, and nobody givees. But when the music stopped, and while I was still feeling all glorified up, what did Mis' Sykes do but break in, something like throwing a stone through a window.

"I should think we might as well get the club name settled to-night," she says with her little formal pucker. "Ain't the Charity Club that we spoke of real nice and dignified for our title?"

It was Mis' Toplady that exploded. It just bare happened it wasn't me, but it turned out to be her.

"Land, land," she says, "*no!* Not one person in fifteen hundred knows what charity means anyhow, and everybody'd get the wrong idee. Let's call it just its plain natural name: The Friendship Village Club. Or, The Whole World Club. Or I dunno but the Universe Club!"

I knew I wouldn't have the sense to keep still right through things. I never do have.

"No, sir!" I says out, "oh, no sir! Universe Club ain't big enough. For if they is any other universe anywhere maybe that might feel left out."

Long before we had settled on any one name, I remember Mis' Toplady come out from behind the refreshment screen and says: "Mr. President, the coffee and sandwiches has come to a boil. Can't you peter off the meeting and adjourn for one week?"

Which wasn't just exactly how she meant to say it. But it seemed to come in so pat that everybody rustled, spontaneous, in spite of themselves. And us ladies begun passing the plates.

After they'd all gone, we was picking up the dishes when Silas come in to see to the stoves.

"Oh, Silas," I says, "wasn't it a splendid meeting? Wasn't it?"

Silas was pinching, gingerish, at the hot stove-door handle, rather than take his coat-tail for a holder.

"I s'pose *you're* satisfied," he says. "You fed 'em, even if we didn't get much done."

"Not get much done!" I says—"not get much done! Oh, Silas, what more did you want to do than we see done here to-night?"

"Well, what kind of a *charity* meeting was that?" says he, sour and bitter rolled into one.

I went up to him with all of Mis' Toplady's fringed tea-napkins in my hands that it was going to take her most of the next day to do up.

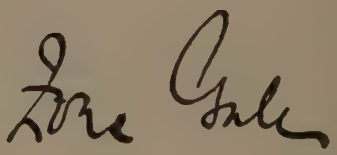
"Why, Silas," I says, "I dunno if it was any kind of a charity meeting. But it was a town meeting. It was a folks' meeting. It was a human meeting. Can't you sense it? Can't you sense it Silas?" I put it to him: "we

got something else besides charity going here to-night—as sure as the living sun."

"I'd like to know what?" he snaps back, and slammed the stove door.

Mis' Toplady, she looked at him tranquil over the tops of her two pairs of spectacles.

"Something that's in folks," says she—and went on hunting up her spoons.



BRUNO LESSING

LOVE AND CLOAKS AND SUITS

THE man who can understand the processes of a woman's mind or the impulses of a woman's heart is not to be envied. For one of the greatest charms of the sex is the mystery of how their minds work, and when you dispel the mystery, you lose the charm. Far better to marvel than to understand. So much for that.

Dora Marx stood in the showroom of J. Protz & Co. gazing disdainfully at the short, squat figure with a huge cigar stuck in the southeast corner of its face, that had disturbed her noon-hour resting spell.

"Mr. Protz is out to lunch," she said. "And all the salesmen are out, too. Can't you come back at one o'clock?"

"Lady," said the man, "wild lions couldn't drag me away from here. Besides I wouldn't know where to go. Besides I had my lunch on the train. I'm Sam Feinbaum of St. Louis."

No monarch ever proclaimed "I am the king!" with more pomp or finality.

"I'm sorry," said Dora. "Won't you take a seat?"

"Suppose, while we're waiting," suggested Feinbaum, "you try on some of the new styles. That'll kill two birds with one stone."

Without expressing curiosity as to the nature of the

birds, Dora proceeded to display to him the latest creations of J. Protz & Co.

As she walked slowly to and fro, wearing one after another of the coats and cloaks piled upon the tables, Sam Feinbaum seemed to devote more attention to the trimness of her figure and the grace of her walk than he did to the wraps.

"I never seen you here before," he remarked.

"I've only been here two weeks," replied Dora.

"Well, old Protz got a peach when he got you," said Feinbaum, lighting a fresh cigar. "You make them bum cloaks of his look like the latest French fashions straight from Paris."

At that moment J. Protz himself bustled into the showroom with a toothpick between his lips.

"Well if it ain't old Sam Feinbaum himself!" he exclaimed, jovially. "Why didn't you let me know you was coming?"

"First because I didn't know it myself," replied Feinbaum, seizing the podgy hand that was offered to him, "and second because I'm getting on pretty well here without your company."

"Take good care of him, Miss Marx," said Protz, with a grin. "He's our best customer but he's a terrible flirt with the ladies. Anything particular I can show you, Sam?"

"Only your rear view as you get out of here," replied Feinbaum, with a grin. "Me and the young lady are getting on fine. I'll drop in your private office later and make you take fifty percent off the prices."

When Protz had departed, Feinbaum winked at Dora.

"That's the way to keep them fresh bosses in their place," he said. "Now you show me some more goods and then I'll make up my mind what to buy. And I'll

tell the old man you talked me into buying them. How's that?"

"I really don't care what you tell him," replied Dora, calmly. "What would you like me to try on next?"

"Oh, my! Ain't we hoity-toity!" mocked Feinbaum. "All right, princess. Try on one of them brown ones over there. But you needn't be afraid of me. Sam Feinbaum mayn't be much to look at but he ain't a bad feller when you know him. And d'ye want me to tell you something?"

He gazed at her quite belligerently. Dora returned his look with one of amazement.

"I'm not very much interested," she said.

"I'm respectable, I am," continued Feinbaum, tapping his stomach with his forefinger. "The boys would never believe it, but I am. They think I'm a regular devil with the women. But not me. Whenever I get lonesome in a strange town I always like to meet a pretty girl and take her out to dinner and theayter and have a nice talk with her. But that's all there is to it. Sam Feinbaum ain't none of them spooners. D'ye get me?"

All this was said with so much earnestness and eagerness that it quite took Dora's breath away. She hardly knew whether to laugh or to be indignant. She picked up another wrap and threw it over her shoulders.

"This is one of the prettiest models," she said. One of the salesmen, returning from his lunch at that moment, saved her from further confidences of Sam Feinbaum. After completing his purchases the buyer departed, with a friendly smile and a confidential wink at Dora. Later that afternoon J. Protz sent for her.

"Say, Miss Marx," he began, "you made a big hit with Sam Feinbaum. He's our very best customer."

Dora murmured her appreciation of the honor conferred upon her.

"He's anxious for you to go out to dinner with him," Protz went on. "I don't let our models go out with customers, as a rule, but this is a different case. Sam is a fine feller and he's always lonesome if he don't have a nice girl to go out with." Her eyes blazed.

"I wouldn't go out with him if he was the last man on earth," she said, quite calmly. "He's got an awful nerve asking me. And so have you."

Protz shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, if that's the way you feel about it," said he, "forget it. Only if you understood the situation you'd understand that nobody is insulting you. You ain't as smart as you think you are."

Dora spent the rest of that afternoon in a state of virtuous indignation. The lot of a working girl was truly hard, she thought, particularly with J. Protz & Co., where squat, old men became impertinent to you and the head of the firm insulted you. For the next few days she treated Protz with icy contempt. Their conversation was confined to purely business remarks. It was, therefore, with something of a shock that, at the end of the week, the cashier handed her a slight increase in her salary.

"What's this for?" she asked.

"The boss's orders," said the cashier with a shrug of his shoulders. It was probably Protz's way, thought Dora, of making amends for the terrible affront he had put upon her. The least she could do in return was to thank him.

"It was very kind of you," she said, quite cordially. "And I haven't any ill-feeling toward you." Protz gazed at her over the rim of his spectacles.

"Kind?" he replied sarcastically. "I don't raise wages out of kindness. And you can feel any way you like about me. Only I notice you're improving in your work and I pay all my people what they're worth. Justice. That's the kind of guy I am, like Sam Feinbaum would say."

Whereupon, you may be sure, Dora hated him more than ever. Because women think more of kindness than of justice.

It was again at lunch time when, save for Dora, the place was deserted, that another customer came in whom she had never seen before. And this time she smiled, in a friendly way.

"Hello, there, Daughter of the Evening Star," he cried, "where are all the sharks that overcharge you for cloaks and suits?"

"Everybody is out to lunch," replied Dora, amiably. "Mr. Protz will be back in half an hour. Won't you take a seat, please?"

"I'd rather have you show me some models," replied the visitor. "I suppose you don't go out to lunch on account of your figure. Well, I don't blame you. My name's Wilson—Elmer Wilson of Detroit. And I'm buying all the lines in New York."

He was a straight, good-looking chap, with black hair that curled in clusters over his forehead and a diamond pin in his tie that blazed forth opulence to Dora. She wished that all customers were as pleasant as he. She showed him the latest models with much enthusiasm and took actual pleasure in pointing out their good qualities. He gave her a list of orders.

"I can't wait just now," he said. "I've got an engagement in fifteen minutes with a bank cashier and it doesn't pay to keep those fellows waiting. Tell old Protz I'll be

in tomorrow but to put this order through in a hurry. What may one call thee, little one?"

"Miss Marx," said Dora with a smile.

"You sort of reminded me of the evening star when I came in," he went on. "I guess I'm pretty fresh. Well, Miss Marx, if I can rustle up a couple of seats for a good show tonight and called you up on the telephone for the nose-bag, would you slam me in the eye?"

"Not over the telephone," replied Dora, laughingly, "but I never met you before and don't know anything about you."

"It's easy to see you're new in the business," replied Wilson. "That makes it more attractive. Anyway, ask the boss about me. He's sure to give me a bad name. I'll call you up and take a chance."

It was with considerable pride that Dora handed her employer the list of goods which the young man had ordered. It would show him, she thought, what she could do with a customer if she wanted to and that there was no need of truckling to such undesirable customers as Sam Feinbaum. But her pride gradually sank as she watched Protz's face.

"Two dozen? Three dozen? Hm! Elmer Wilson?" muttered Protz. "A fat chance. And six dozen of number 328. He got his cheek with him all right." He glared at Dora over his spectacles.

"Did he say anything about paying the balance what his firm owes us?" he demanded.

"No, sir," replied Dora, faintly.

"His uncle is a bum," explained Protz, "but you ain't supposed to bother about them things. It's all right. I'll see him when he comes in and make up my mind how much he can have."

Dora decided not to speak to him about the young man's invitation. She also decided not to accept it. But —you know how it is. A large box of candy arrived by messenger, addressed to Miss Marx and containing a card which read, "From a fresh guy from Detroit." And when, shortly afterwards, he telephoned to her, she said, yes.

"So he wasn't very enthusiastic over my order, hey?" said young Wilson, with a grin.

"He didn't appear to be," answered Dora.

"Well, those New York fellows think all we have to do is to pay their bills in a hurry. We pay them all right but we've got other bills too."

Seated across the table from her, in a snug corner of a fashionable restaurant, Dora thought he was exceedingly handsome and attractive. His dinner coat fitted him flawlessly. He shone in contrast with the kind of customers upon which she was accustomed to wait in Protz's showroom.

"Who is the uncle he was talking about?" she asked.

"That's my Uncle Oliver," he explained. "He's the boss of the store and I'm only an employe. But as I'm the only relative he's got I appointed myself a member of the firm. Gosh, I wish you were out there working for us. Couldn't you manage it? We'd give you the same salary you're getting here. You'd make a dandy manager of a department. How are you fixed, Evening Star? Living with the folks?"

Dora shook her head.

"My parents are dead," she said. "I'm living with my aunt. But I've never been outside of New York and I don't think I'd like it."

"You don't, hey? Well, let me tell you——"

By the time he had finished, Dora began to believe that Detroit was the metropolis of the western world. The pictures of life that he painted for her were beyond anything that she had ever known in New York. And in every one of them figured this good-looking, merry young man whom she found herself liking more and more.

"You're not particularly stuck on old Protz, are you?" he asked.

To Dora's mind there came the repulsive image of Sam Feinbaum and the memory of her employer's intercession for him. The contrast between Feinbaum and Elmer Wilson made her shudder.

"I should say not," she replied. "And I hate the kind of people that come there."

"Well, you'd better think over Detroit," said he. "I'll talk to my uncle about it when I get back and write you. Now let's go to the show."

Wilson remained in New York three days and Dora dined with him each night. She said nothing to her employer of this and he had no way of knowing of her growing intimacy with the good-looking young man. On the morning of the third day Sam Feinbaum appeared in the showroom. He greeted Dora cordially.

"Well, little Bright Eyes," he exclaimed, "here I am back again like a bad penny, with a broken heart. So you wouldn't go out to dinner with an old feller like me, hey? Well, if you knew how I've been worrying about it you'd be sorry for me. We old men—but that ain't business and I came on here special to talk business. D'ye mind putting on another one of them two eighty-eights? I got an idea about them."

With tightly pressed lips, Dora proceeded to show off

Protz's latest model. During the exhibition she was glad to observe that the buyer's attention was completely concentrated upon the garment and not upon herself. She feared that he would make another attempt to engage her in conversation and, with the image of young Wilson so vivid in her mind, she knew that she would become furious if he did so. After she had paraded to and fro several times to show off the wrap to every advantage she heard him grunt with satisfaction.

"You look real swell for a silly kid," he remarked. "Now if you want to make a hit with Sam Feinbaum, just stand like that—don't touch the neck-piece—till I call in that fat boss of yours."

She glared at him and was rather disappointed to see that his gaze was fastened abstractedly upon the garment. There was no excuse for the outburst that was upon the tip of her tongue.

After dinner that evening she accompanied Wilson to the train.

"Look here, Evening Star," he said, as they were parting, "when I write to you it'll be all about business. But if you're smart you'll read between the lines that I'm thinking of you all the time. And when you get out there it'll all be different. Now shut your eyes. I'm going to kiss you good-by. No, don't get mad and don't make a fuss and don't say anything. Because I'm going to kiss you anyway and if you make a rumpus somebody'll call a cop."

Dora laughed and shut her eyes.

For the space of two weeks letters passed back and forth between them. His were glowing but businesslike. Hers were timidly inquiring. And the letters of each merely masked the thoughts that were uppermost in their

minds. The correspondence culminated in a telegram which Dora sent.

"All right. Will take Saturday night train."

Page after page could be written upon the train of thought, the selfish and unselfish motives and the psychology that animated each of them. But, in the end, no one would be any the wiser and the conduct of both Dora and young Wilson would have been the same.

When she had drawn her weekly salary she left a note for Protz in which she told him that she had found another position where, she hoped, her employer would not suggest that she go out to dinner with a disagreeable buyer merely because he was a good customer. She had smiled when she wrote it, conjuring in her mind a picture of Protz filled with dismay and remorse. Fortunately she did not hear the grunt he gave when he read her note, nor his exclamation, "the little fool!" nor witness the gesture with which he threw the note into his waste basket.

On the train Dora found herself sitting opposite a very pretty, well-dressed and refined-looking girl of about her own age. They studied each other across the aisle in furtive glances but, after the fashion of modern girls, refrained from attempts at conversation. When the waiter announced the service of dinner in the dining-car, the girl glanced at her watch and, after a few moments of impatience, walked out of the car. A few minutes later Dora followed her and felt pleased when the dining-car steward placed her beside her seat neighbor. It seemed to her that the girl was rather annoyed about something.

"Are you traveling alone, too?" Dora finally asked. The girl smiled.

"No," she replied. "My father is with me. But when he gets into the smoking car, talking with men, he always forgets all about me. I told him I was hungry and he said he'd come in the moment dinner was announced."

And at that moment he appeared. And Dora experienced one of the greatest shocks of her life. It was Sam Feinbaum. For just the flash of an instant she was filled with confusion. Distrust, suspicion, embarrassment and dread succeeded each other, swiftly, in her gamut of emotions. But she did not know Sam Feinbaum.

"Well, can me for a sardine!" he exclaimed. "If it ain't little Bright Eyes from Protz's. Dora is the name, ain't it? Sadie, this is the little kid I was telling you about. She turned your father down. This is my daughter, Dora. She's a great kid. Is Protz sending you out to drum up trade? He ain't got any sense. Say, is there any waiter on this table or do I got to do all the waiting myself?"

His daughter gazed at Dora with sparkling eyes. And then, while Feinbaum was ordering everything on the menu, she leaned forward and whispered:

"Father is a scream," she said. "Don't pay any attention to him. He's all right if you know him but he'll drive you crazy if you don't understand him. He has pretty girls on the brain."

Whether it was the decency of the girl in trying to put her at her ease or some attractive quality in her face, Dora never could tell, but instantly she liked her. And, in that instant, Sam Feinbaum lost all his terror and repulsion for her. I told you it was queer how their minds work.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Feinbaum, tucking his eyeglasses into his pocket. "So here we are all together. A

regular family party, ain't it? I was telling my girl here how you turned me down."

"Oh, please keep still, father," said Sadie. "You're always talking about the pretty girls you meet everywhere. They must think you're a terrible character."

"I am," said Feinbaum, with a grin. "But you didn't tell me what you're doing on the train. Going West? You see, I'm one of those busybodies what's got to know everything."

"Please behave yourself, father," said his daughter.

"I've given up my position," said Dora. "I've taken a new one in Detroit."

"That's the stuff!" cried Feinbaum, delightedly. "I knew right away you was the right kind of material. Don't get tied down to one place or one town. Make the whole world your home. That's the kind of a guy I am. Maybe some day you'll have a business of your own, if you don't get married and tied down too early. What's the firm? Solomons & Cohen? The Reilly Co.? I know them all."

"It's Oliver Wilson & Co.," replied Dora. With swift intuition Sadie turned to observe her father's face. He was staring at Dora, with his mouth open, his whole countenance stiffened. When he spoke, it seemed as if all the animation had died out of him. His voice and his whole manner were curiously altered—subdued.

"Wilson & Co.," he repeated, in a low voice. "That's very queer. I guess they're all right. Not much capital but old Oliver is an honest man. But I don't see why they need anybody from New York. They're too small a concern. You didn't by any chance—say, excuse me, young lady, but I'm old enough to be your father and I got a strong feeling of liking for you. D'ye mind telling me how you got in touch with them?"

Dora felt somewhat uneasy.

"Mr. Elmer Wilson bought some goods at Protz's," she began. And then she stopped. Feinbaum's face had turned furiously red.

And then, in a new voice, that seemed to Dora strangely composed and dignified——

"Excuse me for bothering you, young lady," he said. "Let's forget all about business and eat our dinner. Say, waiter, bring on more of them olives and celery."

During the remainder of the evening Dora talked with Feinbaum's daughter and by the time that her berth was made up she had learned many curious things about the father's personality. And her liking for the daughter steadily increased. And the picture that Sadie Feinbaum painted of her brother, piqued Dora's curiosity. But of Feinbaum she saw no more that night. He sat in the smoking car, consuming one cigar after another, with great rapidity, in intense and serious meditation. Father and daughter joined her at breakfast the next morning.

"We'll soon be in Detroit," said Feinbaum. "My daughter, as she probably told you, is visiting relatives there. I'd like you to get off the train with us because, if I ain't mistaken, somebody'll be there to meet you and maybe I'd like a word with him—or her—or it."

"It's awfully kind of you, Mr. Feinbaum," said Dora, contritely. She felt somewhat touched by his interest in her.

"Ain't it, though!" said Feinbaum. Dora thought he was sarcastic. Which reminded her of Protz. And Feinbaum fell thirty degrees in her estimation. Yes. Their minds work that way.

To Dora's delight, young Wilson met her at the station. He seized her hand in both of his and she feared that

he was going to kiss her in the presence of the stream of alighting passengers. But if that had been his intention it was promptly checked by the loud greeting of Feinbaum.

"If my old eyes ain't on the blink, it's young Wilson!" cried Feinbaum. The young man, evidently not overpleased, stared at him.

"Hello, Feinbaum," he exclaimed. "What brings you to Detroit?"

"Oh, different things. Only, if you ain't in a tearing hurry, I think I'd like just one minute of your valuable time. D'ye mind stepping into the restaurant in the depot?"

Wilson frowned.

"I'm in a hurry," he said, "but——"

"Sadie," said Feinbaum, "you and our little friend run into the waiting-room for a minute. I'll be right back. Come on, Wilson. It's healthy in the restaurant."

Without another word he strode off. Wilson gazed after him, looked undecidedly at Dora for an instant and then, with a snort of annoyance, following him. The girls found their way to the waiting-room. And there they waited. Which, after all, is what a waiting-room is for. But what annoyed Feinbaum's daughter and worried Dora was that they waited nearly an hour. When Feinbaum returned he was pale.

"Look here, young lady," he said, quietly. "I could tell you things delicately if I had plenty of time. But I ain't got the time. So I got to give you the whole dose at once. Because I got an engagement at Solomons & Cohen in half an hour. So if you want to faint or have a fit, Sadie's got to look after you.

"The Wilson job is off. They don't need you and don't want you. And young Mr. Wilson is taking his

wife back to-morrow morning and support her proper or I tell the district attorney what I know. Now read this note."

It was all that Dora could do to refrain from crying aloud, "his wife?" With trembling hands she unfolded the note.

"Dear Evening Star," it ran, in a familiar handwriting. "I'm afraid our little romance is busted. But you haven't lost by it because the only way Feinbaum got me to give you up was by promising that he would look after you."

Feinbaum lit a cigar and watched Dora furtively as she read. He was prepared for her to scream or faint. She did neither. Her hands fell helplessly into her lap and she looked up into his face.

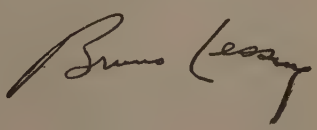
"That's right, baby," he said, kindly. "Don't take on about it. You'll forget all about him in a week. He's just no good. But I know how it is to be young. And my boy is just like me. Just wait till you meet him. Now you run along with Sadie. And when I get ready to go back to St. Louis you come along with us and I'll see that you get a job. But you got to promise me one thing."

Dora gazed at him speechlessly.

"Oh, father?" exclaimed Sadie. "Let her alone. I'll take care of her." But Feinbaum grinned.

"She's got to promise that she'll never ask me to take her out to dinner," he said.

Which was all that Dora needed to become hysterical. You know how it is.



KATHLEEN NORRIS

THE UNBECOMING CONDUCT OF ANNIE

The day had begun badly in a dull veil of suffocating heat at half-past four o'clock. Yesterday had been insufferably close and damp; today promised, from its first dull light, to eclipse it.

By seven o'clock, when Annie Callahan came downstairs in a great hurry—being in some uneasiness as to the exactitude of clocks and the prompt commencement of seven o'clock Mass two blocks away—she was chiefly conscious of a faint headache, of a dry skin and of unutterable weariness where this frightful weather was concerned. The street already looked parched and jaded; Sunday newspapers showed raw touches of red and green as they blew languidly in a hot wind.

Glancing at the kitchen clock as she flung her hat and gloves and prayer book upon a chair, Annie began feverishly to button the cuffs of her stiff white shirtwaist. Her mother, back from an earlier service, had already discarded her widow's bonnet and the shawl she wore even in August and was busy with the first steps toward breakfast.

Mrs. Callahan was squarely built, with satin-black hair pushed severely off her honest peasant face. Usually she kept her rosy color, but today was an exception; she

was pale from the heat and beads of perspiration stood upon her downy upper lip and upon her big, capable hands.

"Fierce!" said Annie simply.

Mrs. Callahan shook her head and sighed as one whom words failed. She sat down and fanned her hot face with a limp blue apron.

"It's a wonder you wouldn't get your sleep," she suggested when Annie had completed her outer costume, straightened her white hat and picked up her small belongings. "You could go to ten with Mary and Josie!"

"I have to go to Coney with the Rehans, ma!" Annie reminded her fretfully. "I couldn't get out of it—*darn* it!" And with this passionate protest she flitted from the kitchen to hurry along the burning street toward the jangling church bells.

Left alone, Mrs. Callahan proceeded methodically with the preparations for the day's first meal, her thoughts moving, mother-fashion, from the sleeping forms of her two younger daughters upstairs to that of her only son.

Josie and Mary were good ger'rls, their mother reflected indifferently; not as stylish and as smart as Annie, but good ger'rls. Annie was a school-teacher; Josie worked in a telephone exchange; Mary was still in high school. These last would come scrambling downstairs presently to help with the housework in a slap-dash sort of fashion and be off to the latest low Mass.

It was Jim, however, that she adored; Jim who had baffled her by growing to be strong and silent and clever at twenty, and who never listened to her scolding and who did not go to church any more. He had been an exemplary altar boy until he was thirteen or fourteen, making her heart swell with utter felicity as she knelt in the church, watching his angelic head and his big clum-

sy shoes move about below the gold candles; but now he was not even "practical."

Not to be "practical"—one of her own! And she loved him so that she could only kiss his magnificent tumble of black curls and obey him when he answered her anxious scolding with a good natured "Cut it out, ma!"

Annie came back from Mass paler and more headachy, and was slipping her scalding coffee at the kitchen table when big lumpy Mary and pretty blue-eyed Josie and yawning Jim came downstairs. There was one more member of the family, Clark, the deaf and dumb foster-son who was about Jim's age; but Clark, to his overweening pride, had a job now as night watchman of a big hospital and would come in at about nine o'clock for a day's sleep.

"Say, Annie, you'll have to get out of the Rehan date—you'll die—packed in the trolley a day like this!" Josie protested, panting as she rested both bare elbows on the table and looked thoughtfully into the coffee cup she held in both hands. "The O'Connors telephoned a few minutes ago and they want you to go out with them in the car."

"Oh, they didn't!" Annie said, sending a despairing look about the group.

"Phone the Rehans, darlin'," suggested Mrs. Callahan comfortably. "They'll understand!"

"Oh, I can't ma!" Annie answered almost impatiently.

"Joe Curley'll be with the O'Connors," Jim remarked.

A delicate scorn dilated the nostrils of Annie's short nose.

"That makes a great difference in my young life!" she said bitterly. And in the silence that followed this speech—a rather surprising speech for the usually reserved Annie—she added wearily, "I wish I was dead!"

"It's a sin to say that!" Mary reminded her vivaciously. Her mother did not repeat the reproof but continued to watch the pale, disappointed face of her first born with concerned and sympathetic eyes.

"The party was to be you and the two O'Connors and Joe Curley and Alice Barry and me," Jim said. And at this Annie's eyes suddenly watered.

"Oh, Jim, are you going?" she faltered. For to have this adored brother in any party was in itself enough for the happiness of the Callahan girls.

"Well, I guess so," Jim admitted. And then there was another pause, broken only by the clicking and tinkling of the heavy plates and cups and the dingy, plated spoons, until Annie said again in helpless protest:

"*Darn* it! The thing is," she went on slowly, "that Lizzie Rehan has been after me since I don't know when to go with them to Coney, and she came to school at lunch time Friday and she just wouldn't leave me off! It'll be the kids and her Aunt Julia and a lot of nasty, messy lunch in paper boxes," the girl added, pushing away her plate and leaning back in her chair, "and it's going to be an awful day—it's boiling now! A girl fainted in church. And I just *can't* do it, ma," she broke off in fresh rebellion; "all that noise and heat and crowding, and the smells of fried fish and popcorn——"

"Phone her that you have a headache and that you're in bed—you can jump into bed for five minutes!" suggested Mary.

"Go on, darlin', phone!" augmented her mother.

"Oh, I can't!" Annie put her black head in her hands and her whole slender body heaved with one great sigh. "It's just one of the times you *can't!*" she moaned.

But she did drag herself to the box telephone in the hall, with one finger nervously drawing little squares and

circles upon the scratched and scribbled surface of the plaster wall while she talked. These three or four uncomfortable minutes of argument were all that stood between her and an endless day with the scrambling and noisy Rehans, or a delicious cool run with the O'Connors in their second hand but entirely serviceable motor car. The first would be merely an endurance test for eyes, ears, nose, nerves, patience and good manners. The second would be all pleasure; even, thought Annie, the time of reconciliation with Joe Curley, who had been Annie's "friend" for several years and with whom she had just had a thrilling and invigorating quarrel.

She cleared her throat when she heard Alice Rehan's voice, and the little squares and circles began to move more briskly than before. The Callahan family, in the kitchen, listened breathlessly while she telephoned. No use! It was almost instantly obvious that Alice had not the slightest intention of letting her escape.

" . . . I didn't know, because it's so frying hot!" they heard Annie say presently in rather a forlorn voice. "Oh, I see! Yes, I see—but you could eat it at home, couldn't you? . . . Yes, I suppose so! All right, then, Alice . . . No, I had a sort of headache . . . I went to seven and I guess it's going to be a scorcher . . . Well, that was just it. I was wondering if the glare of the ocean would make it worse . . . I see. Oh, all right then, Alice . . . Yes, I will—a little after ten. All right . . . Yes, I will! All right."

"She wants me to stop for Pidgy Sculley—*that* young one's going!" Annie said, pale with disappointment, coming back to the kitchen. "I couldn't get out of it—she was wild when I tried to. The first thing she said was that Bernard told her last night that Annie Callahan would call up this morning and say she wasn't coming—"

"That was your chance to say 'Bernard guessed right!" Mary suggested vivaciously.

"Wouldn't you wonder that they'd bother a ger'rl like that," Mrs. Callahan observed in mild resentment. "Alice Rehan is cute enough to know that Annie'd sooner be shot! It's a queer ould idea they'd have of giving anybody a good time!"

"You come along with us then, Jo," said Jim generously to his second sister. Josie's face lighted as if from within. There were harmonious plans circulating about the littered, sticky, brown oilcloth table as Annie went, hot and weary and heavy hearted, upstairs.

The house seemed full of flies and dryness and reflected hot lights from all sorts of surfaces and corners. Annie's face, in the cheap blotched mirror of the cheap yellow bureau, looked pasty and spotted, at least in her own disgusted eyes. She made her bed, conscious only of a longing to throw herself down upon it and weep.

The obnoxious Sculley child, a putty-faced big girl of thirteen with stout legs in white stockings and long, lifeless black curls falling upon a pink silk dress, was waiting at a picket gate under a dusty rose arbor. Annie knew from a fellow teacher that Pidgy was a hopelessly dull scholar and wrote notes to the boys, and she felt in her a natural enemy. But she smiled at Pidgy.

"Hot!" she said.

"I'll tell the world!" said Pidgy easily. Annie's expression became that of the school-teacher and they went on in silence.

Heat, noise, confusion, laughter and perspiring running to and fro; this was the Rehan home. The small, hot, gaudily papered rooms were all opened to flies, streaming sunlight, screaming children, boxes, bottles, surging adults. Alice, a pale, sickly looking woman with

beaming eyes and poor teeth, was superintending her fat, strong husband, who gave a first impression of straw hat, shirt sleeves and immense cigar; her large-toothed young daughters, Sister and Regina; her fat, heavy infant sons, Berny and Richard; and her brother Miles, a pimpled young man with red eyes, who was now smoking a cigarette, holding the smaller baby and operating the phonograph.

There was a long trip ahead and a change of cars. They *must* get started. Would Annie hold on to Regina —Regina must take Sister's hand. Milesy had the baby; Bernard could carry the big box; here, Pidgy could take the other box. Could Annie take the newspapers? And Sister could carry the little box—that was right. That left mamma the two thermos bottles and Berny—oh, and the bag with the baby's things. All right, Milesy could carry that, too. Now they were *fine*.

They streamed down the hot Sunday street, Alice straining her already tired throat muscles with unnecessary advice. If they couldn't get seats together in the car, never mind—sit where they could. If he got restless, Milesy was to give him a cocoanut cooky. No, Berny couldn't have a cooky now.

Berny wept; the box of cookies was hastily torn open, its wrappers strewn in their wake. Annie remained in the detestable group against every instinct of soul and body. If they liked to do this sort of thing, she thought resentfully, why need they drag her into it?

Everyone had to stand on the gorged trolley car except Richard and Regina, who sat upon the lunch basket at their father's feet and quarreled without cessation down in a forest of strange legs and skirts. Milesy shifted the baby from aching arm to arm. Annie, the refined and sensitive, was packed between two noisy and conversa-

tional strangers so tightly that she had neither the power nor the need to lift her arm to the dangling strap above her head.

By the time they reached the beach they seemed to have endured a lifetime of stupidities, delays, quarrels, joking, half serious and entirely serious; they seemed to have lost and recovered at least half of their possessions, and Berny's white cotton stockings and Sister's embroidered voile dress were dirty from several falls.

They toiled over boardwalks, struggled in dry sand. For half a mile the beach was black with people, fringed with the noise and confusion of food stalls and bathing houses. Underneath their feet cigar butts, comic newspapers, empty paper bags, gum wrappers and cardboard cracker and candy boxes were trampled into the sand. Thousands of merry-makers moved in mingled streams to and fro, thousands more were settled with boxes and newspapers. Hundreds were in bathing suits, lying half buried in sand cases shaped like rude mummy boxes. Voices, laughing, shrieking, calling, rent the air, and the shrill whistles of the peanut stands rose above them.

At the left, oddly low and colorless and almost unnoted, the Atlantic was sliding and circling and receding quietly; and upon the whole scene—pale blue water and crowded, multicolored strand—the fierce and burning sun of August smote without mercy; there was a dull haze far out at sea but on the shore only a universal sticky glitter and glare.

Annie, trying to seem apart from her stumbling and straggling and laughing associates, was unfortunate enough to step upon a hairy foot, half buried in sand; its owner had a quick sense of humor and everyone within hearing laughed ecstatically. The girl went on with

burning cheeks, anger, shame, humiliation and utter disgust brimming together in her heart.

The hideous day dragged on; mid-afternoon found them wandering along Surf Avenue between booths of kewpies and garish Japanese prizes, pails of hot corn on the cob, past stalls of greasily odorous sausages and brightly pink and brown ice cream bricks and ranged bare tables where hot diners were discussing fried crabs. The barkers before railways and variety shows seemed to be driving hatpins into Annie's throbbing temples; she felt that if Miles Dempsey did not stop trying to talk like a Jew she would burst into tears.

Who on earth was he, talking to Bernard? Tall, handsome in white flannels, with a coolly humorous eye and a ready, friendly laugh.

"My folks, Irv," said Bernard, introducing. "Meet m'wife, brother'n law, Miles Dempsey. Miss Callahan."

Miss Callahan felt his firm hand, found him walking beside her in the babel and confusion.

Annie was not yet twenty-two and she was pretty, with dark eyes and lips almost startlingly red in the pallor of her face. She had on the white crash hat, too, and the new Swiss with the black ribbon. But she was so exhausted and discouraged now that all her instinctive arts deserted her and she could not respond at first to Mr. Irving Small's advances. Her one conscious desire was to get home and to have the sun go down.

However, this was but momentary. Before they reached the man with the weights Annie was looking up mischievously from under the crash hat, and anyone listening—but nobody could have heard the discharge of a cannon then, much less a mere conversation—might have been the wiser for the following remarks:

"Yes, you did!" from Annie.

"Well, all right, ask him!" from Irv.

"You didn't *see* me when you came up to Bernard, so how could it have been that it was to meet me?"

"Well, all right, ask him!"

"Yes, I will—not."

"Maybe I didn't let him *know* I had seen you—that's diff'rent!"

"I'll bet you don't!"

"Well, I'll bet I do."

"Go on then, tell me!"

"I don't know that I will!"

"Why not?" This was said very low, and after a pause.

Annie let the pause linger while she looked straight up at him in a disquieting and direct fashion she had, and then she said hesitatingly:

"I don't want to make you cross."

By this time they were standing still in the sidewalk traffic, oblivious of everything except the familiar, enchanting, unchanging rules of the game. Irving Small fingered the knot of glycerined ribbons at her breast and there was a trace of huskiness in his voice as he said:

"Lissen, do you think you could make me cross—huh, do you?"

When they caught up with the others two minutes later, Annie was for the first time that day the person whom Alice had invited to the family picnic. The girl glittered, laughed; she flirted not only with Irving but with the hitherto neglected Miles, and even with Bernard. She had been captious half an hour ago; now she wanted to do everything, go round the railways and down the slides and over the falls and up in the wheels. And the more she laughed the prettier and the funnier she got, until Irving Small was openly telling them all that she was—

gosh, she was a card, she was different from anyone else he had ever seen!

The jam decreased; it was actually six o'clock. Irving asked them all to dinner at the Hotel Breakwater. Alice sighed, shaking her head.

"Leave us go to one of these places here," Bernard suggested, looking down surging Surf Avenue. "That's grand—the Breakwater, band and porches and everything—but it's a mile down the beach!"

"Well, the car's right here!" said Irv, surprised.

The car! The enchantment went on; Annie sat next to him, of course, on the roomy front seat; and how admiringly he watched the graciousness with which she took both Sister and Berny into her lap! A daring pleasantry from the callous Bernard was not wanting as the four domestically grouped themselves; Annie looked down in embarrassment, and Irv's laugh was checked in the middle, and he said in an angry undertone, of Bernard, "Big boob!"

The other six somehow distributed themselves comfortably in the tonneau; it was delicious to sit back and glide along, superior to the struggling crowds, after the heat and burden of the day. There was no need to go to dinner at once; they drove about for a while, up and down the congested streets; and the time came when Irving added to every remark, in a serious undertone to Annie, "I'm *crazy* about you!"

This made Annie's heart flutter as Joe Curley had never made it flutter in four years of friendship. The man said daring things that kept her in a constant state of thrill.

"When you're my wife, you won't talk like that!" he said. And later—but oh, how differently from Bernard's coarseness!—he said with a significant glance at the pale silken heads of the Rehan children: "Wouldn't it be

kinder fun—out for Sunday, huh? You and me and the kids?"

Annie came into her mother's kitchen at eleven o'clock that night, pale, electrified, radiant; remarking merely, in the spare lingual coinage of the day, that she had had the time of her life.

And on Tuesday night, Thursday and Friday nights, Saturday night and all day Sunday, she and Irv were together. Joe Curley came in grimly late on Saturday afternoon and grimly and briefly asked her to marry him —words for which Annie's maiden heart had been hungering a few weeks ago. But today she hardly heard him, and if she appreciated the honor he paid her it was only because it made what Irv prized the more valuable:

The family, perfectly aware of what had transpired in the front hallway when Joe was wretchedly filling the front door, were rather silent at dinner; they all liked Joe and they were not quite inclined to like Irv. And Annie, who was all dressed for Irv, was silent too, but with no similar sense of compunction or regret. Her face blazed, her breath came lightly, her whole body seemed lifted and floating in the ecstatic emotion that wrapped her.

Everything from the touch of his hand on hers when she opened the door to the kiss he stole from her at parting three hours later, was sheer enchantment. The girl had never tasted the full delight of it before.

Joe had no money to speak of, just his rather humble job. Any girl who married Joe must resign herself to a long struggle. But Irv had money; Irv had a car, and big gloves, and Irv could order a dinner with the air of a millionaire. Annie, the conscientious, hard working member of the family, the critical yet devoted

sister and daughter, after years of quiet development and uplift was suddenly like any other young woman in love.

She had always known it would come, of course; everybody got married at about her age. But what she had not foreseen was that wealth and change and the element of excitement and novelty would come too. Instead of settling down prosaically with one of the Keatings or the Garveys or the Curleys right from the neighborhood—to marry a man from Cincinnati! There was a superiority about the mere phrase that allured the refined and ambitious Annie.

He dined with the Callahans about ten days after the picnic and they used the almost useless dining room on that occasion. Mrs. Callahan dressed her black hair in wet scallops and panted in the unwonted discomfort of a clean white shirtwaist and a serge skirt tugging at the belt. Mary and Josie were daring in organdie and transparent silk stockings, and Jim was gravely friendly at the head of the table. Annie, anxiously radiant, watched one face and another, her heart singing with the joy of having Irv like her folks.

Everybody laughed at everybody's jokes tonight; Mary and Josie stopped to kiss their mother's hair or to give Jim affectionate little pushes as they waited on the table. Mrs. Callahan's big form heaved with mirth; she said that Mr. Small would think they were half witted, the lot of them!

"Saving your presence, Mr. Small," she said, pride and love shining through her reproving manner, "the whole lot of them has no more manners than a throop of Ayrabs!"

"Well, that seems to me a darned nice way to be!" Irving said gallantly. "I'm a lonely sort of fellow," he

added, "and you don't know what it means to me—well, to have a home dinner now and then! My folks all died when I was a baby——"

Annie's eyes were shining; her mother made a little pitying and shocked sound: tut-tut-tut.

"I tell you, if I can get a wife and home some day I'm the one to appreciate it!" Irving went on.

But—this was going too fast. Mrs. Callahan's smile faded into a sort of amiable blankness that her children knew well as a preliminary to a deliberate snub, and her voice was dry as she said temperately:

"You that sees ger'rls everywhere, and they ready enough to listen to you, will take your time in finding one, I'll be bound! It'd be a poor wife you could pick up wid a pleasant word or two, and you ten thousand miles from home! My grandmother—God rest her, for she was a quare one that could dance as good as a ger'rl and she pushin' seventy!—she had a sayin', 'There's no luck in going to London for a turnip whin the neighbors' gardens is full of them!' "

Steadily and evenly delivered, with the speaker's keen gray eye fixed upon the guest, these words had a most uncomfortable effect upon the circle. Annie turned scarlet and the younger girls nearly as red, while all three looked anxiously at Irving with smiles that were nervous, apologetic and shamed. Irving was silent, swallowing with a dry throat. It was only Jim who preserved enough presence of mind to break into the pause.

"You and your grandmother that was pushing seventy!" he said to his mother with a sort of affectionate scorn. "Was that the one that you used to say was always the life of the wake?"

"No, that was my Uncle Joe's Jo," Mrs. Callahan

answered seriously. "He was one that had the great stren'th in him, the way he could heave a peat over the roof, and him a child!"

Irving shouted with appreciative laughter, always a sure way to Mrs. Callahan's favor, and this fortunately led the conversation into more agreeable channels; so that the hot, delicious dinner in the shabby room and under the bare hanging bulb of glaring light was a great success.

That night, sitting with Josie and Mary in the hot darkness before the screen upon which "Love's Lie" was unfolding, Irving asked Annie to marry him, and Annie consented.

This radiant irresponsible time was followed by one more thoughtful on the following day. Irving went upon his way; he was a road salesman for a clothing firm, and to Annie was left the woman's part of waiting, planning and hoping. If to the girl herself this short fortnight of excitement and change sometimes seemed a dream, to her family the whole affair was quite unbelievable; and it was the anxious mother who suggested that nothing be said of her altered plans until Irv came back in October.

Annie agreed; but she hungered so for the mere sound of his name that she went, on an evening, to the Rehans' and deliberately introduced it into a somewhat languishing family conversation.

"That feller we met at Coney?" Alice said, rousing from the stupor of aching weariness that closed all her days. "He was a cut-up, wasn't he?"

"He came to see us—had dinner there," Annie had to say.

"Well, what do you know about that?" Bernard said

indifferently. "Say, what does he *do* anyway?" he asked with a sudden interest.

For some reason this vaguely disturbed Annie's spirit.

"I thought you knew him!" she said uneasily.

"No. I only met him at the yard," Bernard said. "Cutter knew him—Cutter comes from Cincinnati too. I guess he's a high roller, all right! Those guys used to play poker and everything. Cutter said he knew him at the time of his divorce—I guess it wasn't his fault, I've forgotten all he told me about it."

The walls with their gilt and chocolate and orange scrolls, the upright black piano shedding sheet music upon the rug, the picture of Alice in her wedding gown above the false mantel—these seemed to move in a nauseating fashion before Annie's eyes. She felt the cords in her throat constrict and experienced, above all other pangs, one of utter terror lest she audibly choke or begin to sob or begin to laugh. So utterly routed was her spirit that she could not tell whether or no she was betraying herself; did they notice anything—could she prevent their noticing anything?

"Divorced is he?" said Alice disapprovingly. "I didn't know he was a Produstunt."

Annie went on rocking automatically and presently glanced up, moving her dry lips in some sort of smile. The lights—the lights were hideously bright and glaring. She picked up a magazine; she would never want to see again the particular film actress whose brightly colored face chanced to adorn the cover.

Presently she could escape. She was walking, her whole soul and body enveloped in a flame of confusion and pain; she was walking dazedly toward home through the soft early evening. Oh, fool, fool, fool—not knowing anything about him! To let him kiss her, to believe

him, to plan that too bright future with him at her side!

Shoes at six dollars! Shoes were coming down. This horrible bright window was full of them; she had come to a full stop before them, she did not know why. She went on, panting a little, often standing perfectly still as breath and motion failed together before some suffocating memory.

The drug store window full of chocolates; usually seventy cents a pound, during this sale two pounds for one dollar. Oh, ma had been right, there was no luck in going to London for turnips with the neighbor's yard full of them! Oh, agony—agony—agony, to be distracted from the full measure of her misery for a second, only to feel the bitter waters closing again above her head! Oh, Irv——

Her own gate, dimly visible in the luminous summer dusk. She jumped as a shadow rose among the shadows. Joe Curley.

She knew what kept him there, and even in her own heart's distress and hurry she could feel a pang of pity for Joe. He had been standing here watching the Callahans' windows because he loved her. Just as she had gone to the Rehans' tonight because she loved Irv.

She took his hand and something in his husky voice as he answered her low greeting surprised her, and she wheeled him about so that the light of the near-by street lamp fell upon his hard boyish face. It was shining with tears.

And suddenly at that Annie's tears came, and her lip shook, and she caught his coat lapels and brought her strained face close to his as she said heart-brokenly:

"Oh, Joe, I don't know how I'm going to tell them—they don't like him anyway—and I never knew until tonight. He's been married before—he's been divorced!"

"And didn't he never tell ye?" demanded Joe, one arm about her, quite shocked out of his own emotion by this news.

"Oh, Joe, would I go with him if he had!"

"The dir-r-rty——" But Joe changed his phrase. His voice softened and dropped and he substituted mildly, "Maybe he's a Produstunt and doesn't know how it would hurt ye!"

It was the hardest speech he had ever made; but he had his reward. Annie clung to him as she answered:

"Oh, Joe, of course he didn't! He—he's too good to have meant to deceive me. Come—come on in with me, Joe, and help me to tell them!"

To be needed by her in this intimate hour! Joe's heart swelled with ecstasy. He was behind her, big and protecting, as she faced them all; Jim reading the paper to his mother at the kitchen table, Mary supposedly studying Euclid, Josie wiping dishes and Mrs. Callahan supreme at the dishpan. He heard her voice—Annie's usually controlled and clear voice—break into bitter crying as she began:

"Ma—ma I think I'm going to die—my heart's breaking . . ."

She was on her mother's breast; everyone in the kitchen was in tears.

Annie did not die, nor did she cry quite all night although she said—and honestly believed—that she did. She fell asleep at about three o'clock, and her mother let her sleep in the morning, and her brother and sisters tiptoed about in an agony of caution through the hot, early hours.

She came downstairs, pale and listless, at eleven, and all through that day and the next and the next there were

bitter bursts of tears; sometimes she wanted to abuse Irv and their mildest excuses for him infuriated her; and sometimes she raged because they had all hated him from the first she said, and were glad it had all come to an end. In other moods she forbade all mention of the matter again, and sometimes, in the twisting pain of her heart, she would torture her mother with dark hints that she might marry the man she loved anyway.

"You'll not do what's wrong," Mrs. Callahan would say heavily, in exquisite uneasiness.

"What's *wrong* about it? The law allows it——"

But Annie was usually ashamed, sooner or later, of this madness, and would strangle her weeping mother with penitent arms and press her own wet cheeks against the beloved face.

Gaily unconscious letters continued to come from Irv; Annie burned them. She had launched in his wake one terrific epistle of fury and reproach but she did not have the satisfaction of knowing that he had received it. His mail followed him here, awaited him there, was subject to maddening misdirections and delays everywhere.

Joe was wonderful in this crisis. He had a sort of boyish, awed respect for her grief that was infinitely comforting. This passion of revealed love in a woman of his chaste and reserved race was almost terrifying to Joe. He never dreamed of combating it or questioning it. It was as if Annie were marked with a fatal malady; set apart from his simple hopes and affairs.

Robbed of the love making element that had always distressed her in him, Annie found Joe an ideal companion. He never besieged her for responses now, never embarrassed her with a lowered voice and a sudden descent into courtship. She even laughed sometimes with Joe, for he was as simple as he was straightforward and

earnest, and his occasional touches of brogue—Joe was not American born—always amused her.

"We stopped to put water in the car at a troth, didn't we, Joe?" Annie would say on a hot night when the young people had returned from a country run in Jim's disgraceful old car.

"Well, I never said troth, then!" Joe would return, grinning widely.

"What else would you say but troth?" their mother might demand roundly.

"Annie says it is"—Joe would make a frightful word of it—"throth!" he might bring out triumphantly.

And the giddy younger girls and Jim would laugh until the tears came, and Annie would reluctantly laugh too; a sound more delicious to her mother's ears than any other in the world.

So two weeks—three weeks—went by; and Mrs. Callahan began to say to the younger members of the family that Joe and Annie would make up their minds quicker this way than if that blaygyard of a Small had never come the ger'rl's way at all. Annie never spoke of him now; she was a little graver, a little older than the old Annie, that was all. And once she said in strict confidence to Josie—who could hardly wait until Annie and Joe were fairly out of the house that evening to repeat it to the others—that she felt horribly ashamed of the whole matter, that "it did not seem fair—to—well, to any other man who might care for her some day, or might have been in love with her all the time for that matter!"

Then there came the matter of Ed Curley's house. Ed was Joe's older brother who was to be married to a small Irish cousin before she fairly stepped off the boat at Ellis Island this October. So it was decided among the interested Callahans that a little house should be found for

Norah and Ed and furnished for the bride "against she'd be coming."

And the details of this business were left almost entirely to Joe and Annie. The others all assisted on Sundays or in the late afternoons, but it was Annie and Joe who found the four room cottage and selected the brown paper and the rosy paper and the linoleum for the kitchen; Ed only an humbly admiring onlooker who paid all bills. Annie and Joe debated over towels and sheets and got a man to spade up the garden and planted a rose beside the kitchen door.

And here Annie saw the man in a new light. She had always taken Joe Curley rather for granted; like many a wiser man, Joe was not wise in his love making, and his clumsy overtures and obvious adoration had always rather angered and shamed than pleased her.

But now Joe was natural and at ease; driving nails, measuring surfaces, facetious with delivery boys, equal to any emergency. He and Annie had more than one meal on the clean little pine kitchen table; she discovered that Joe could broil chops and knew a good deal about gas stoves. And then one afternoon Pete Haley, foreman of the works, stopped to give Joe a message; would Joe see to it? It was important. Pete wouldn't feel free to go on vacation unless Joe would take charge.

"You're a wonder!" Pete said simply, departing after a low-voiced conference; and Annie was proud and even a little pleased that Pete had obviously drawn his own conclusions as to the destined occupants of the new house. She began to send shy glances at Joe's bigness and cleanness and sturdy handsomeness; looks that were at once proud, proprietary and loving.

On a Saturday afternoon in October they were all in the Callahan back yard, Jim cleaning his car, Josie on the

steps sewing, Mrs. Callahan coming and going in and out of kitchen and porch, Mary, Annie and Joe Curley raking leaves and cleaning the premises generally.

Presently a man came along the side passage from the street and stood staring at them and smiling broadly. It was Irving Small.

All at once everybody saw him, and consternation fell upon the hilarious group. Annie dropped her rake and went slowly toward her mother, and Mrs. Callahan turned stern eyes upon the intruder and tightened a big arm about Annie. Mary and Josie stared in open-eyed excitement. Joe scowled and went on with slow, automatic passes of his leaf broom. Only Jim rallied and came from behind his car with a puzzled smile.

"Well, say—hello, folks!" said Irv, somewhat at a loss.

"Well, it's you Mr. Small!" Mrs. Callahan observed unencouragingly.

"Sure it's me!" The visitor looked about the silently appraising group, bewildered and a little affronted. "Didn't you get my letters, Annie?" he demanded.

"Yes, I got them," Annie said in a strained little mincing voice, raising her chin. The awkwardness of the encounter deepened and widened like a tangible wall; Annie looked down in utter confusion.

"We're burning the leaves!" exclaimed Mary in a bright, social voice.

"Say, what is all this!" said Irv in a sudden angry tone and with red spots in his cheeks. "This is a swell kind of a welcome! I wrote Annie from Montreal—"

"And I didn't read the letter!" said Annie.

Irv stared at her, plainly stupefied, during a long silence. Then her mother rose to the occasion.

"My ger'rl is a Catholic, Mr. Small," she said firmly and not unkindly, "and you should know well that she can

have no dealings with a man that has a living wife! You made love to the ger'rl and you wint out of your way that she should set her heart on you——"

"Say, what is this—a joke?" demanded Irv in rude interruption. "Let me in on this. Who says I had a wife?"

Annie's flushed, unhappy, nervous face paled with real horror.

"Bernard Rehan did—he told me so himself!" she said, breathless and anxious.

"Said I was a bigamist, hey?" asked Irv with a quiet and ugly smile. "Well," he added deliberately, "here's where he gets his face pasted in for a liar! I never had a wife and I ain't as crazy now to get one as I was——"

"No, but lissen—but lissen——" Annie besought him eagerly. "He *did* say so, Irv. And it nearly killed me! Didn't it, ma—didn't it, Josie? Didn't I carry on something awful? He said that Mr. Cutter at the office knew you, and that he had been a friend of yours when you were divorced——"

"*Cutter* was divorced—that's what he said!" Irving interrupted again shrewdly. "Sure Cutter was divorced," he added more confidently as Annie, realizing that she might thus have misconstrued Bernard's remarks, leaned back against her mother with a sort of vertigo. "Well, I must say you're a fine one for any man to have for his girl!" he taunted her bitterly. "I go off on my job and you begin to run around the neighborhood starting bigamy stories about me——"

Annie began to cry bitterly and turned to the unfailing refuge of her twenty-one years, her mother's broad shoulders. But Mrs. Callahan held her off and her tone was stern.

"Well, Annie—these are fine doings—" she reproached her amazedly.

"You could have found out, Annie——" Josie added, with vivacious disapproval.

"Or you could have at *least* read his letters!" Mary drawled.

"By golly, this is the deuce, Annie!" Jim contributed in honest, brotherly rebuke. "It's not Irv's fault if you didn't get Bernard straight, and it's—it's the deuce to have him come here—with his plans all made—expecting——"

"I'd have had a chicken in the pot and maybe a little tasteen of something to drink for um," Mrs. Callahan added, in hospitable concern. "This is no welcome for the poor lad, and him comin' straight to his ger'rl——"

"All my plans made—everything in line for a January wedding," Irv said airily with a sort of hard philosophical enjoyment of the girl's consternation and shame. "Told my boss I was going to be married, made arrangements at the bank for only a thousand dollars for the honeymoon! That's all. Stopped in Montreal and picked out a ring—only set me back two hundred and forty bucks—that was all. Well, I guess I'm not needed here——"

"Stay and have a taste of supper wid us," Mrs. Callahan urged him hastily. "I'm ashamed of that ger'rl's boldness and badness to ye——"

"Oh no, *thank* you, Mrs. Callahan," said Irv, who realized that he was carrying off this painful matter exceedingly well and who would soften on no terms. He raised his derby splendidly, grinned significantly at pretty Josie as one who performs a prearranged part, and walked leisurely and elegantly away.

There was a ghastly silence in the back yard as Jim returned to his motor, looked surprisedly at the chamois skin in his hand and began to rub a dingy mudguard.

"That's a fine job, and I hope you're proud of yourself, miss!" he observed with a dark look at his oldest sister.

"I hope you enjoy losing a two hundred dollar solitaire!" Mary put in cuttingly.

"I think that was something terrible, Annie!" Josie said in tender and pained reproach. At that Annie's high held chin came lower and her lip shook, and when her mother added gravely, "There's many would give a ger'rl a good whipping for the like of this nonsense, hur'rtin' and shamin' a good man that follied her all the way from Canada to see would she marry him!" her self-control broke down entirely and the trembling and ecstatic Joe had her in his arms at last, with the dear little head he loved pressed for refuge against his shoulder.

"They're all against you, darlin'," Joe said huskily over and over, "but never mind, you done what was right if you don't love him!"

"I don't love anybody!" sobbed Annie hysterically. "And I never will marry him or anybody else! You all hated him and you were all quick enough telling me, a month ago, that he never would make me happy or any woman happy! And now you're all on his side and you hate me and you think I've disgraced you all! I don't want any dinner, ma," she added passionately, "and I can't go to the movies as I said I would, Joe," she went on to the man from whose arms she was disengaging herself. "I'm going upstairs—and I don't want *anyone* to speak to me——"

"We don't have to go to the movies," Joe said tenderly. "We'll take a little walk and maybe go in to see Ed and Nora!"

"I wouldn't have me worst enemy marry a man she didn't love!" Mrs. Callahan said mildly after a pause.

"I only meant that—I didn't mean anything, Ann," murmured Josie.

Mary was crying with sympathy; Jim looked after his sobbing sister with troubled eyes as she flashed into the house. It was to be noted, however, that she snatched her clean shirtwaist as she ran past the ironing horse on the porch.

"Give her five minutes that she'll be crying in, Jim," said Mrs. Callahan cautiously, "and then you go up and talk to her—you could always talk Annie round even whin you were the little ladeen! She'll be all right," she added comfortably. "And if you want the truth that's in it, I'm not sorry to have that one take his departure—he had a mean eye on him, and he spoke very wild with the anger he had! Stay to supper, Joe," she finished, putting her arm in his mother-fashion as they turned toward the house. "We'll all be talkin' until all hours, and sure you're almost one of the family—already."

Kathleen Norris.

MARY ROBERTS RINEHART

TWENTY-TWO

I

The Probationer's name was really Nella Jane Brown, but she was entered in the training school as N. Jane Brown. However, she meant when she was accepted to be plain Jane Brown. Not, of course, that she could ever be really plain.

People on the outside of hospitals have a curious theory about nurses, especially if they are under twenty. They believe that they have been disappointed in love. They never think that they may intend to study medicine later on, or that they may think nursing is a good and honorable career, or that they may really like to care for the sick.

The man in this story had the theory very hard.

When he opened his eyes after the wall of the warehouse dropped, N. Jane Brown was sitting beside him. She had been practising counting pulses on him, and her eyes were slightly upturned and very earnest.

There was a strong odour of burnt rags in the air, and the man sniffed. Then he put a hand to his upper lip—the right hand. She was holding his left.

"Did I lose anything besides this?" he inquired. His

little moustache was almost entirely gone. A gust of fire had accompanied the wall.

"Your eyebrows," said Jane Brown.

The man—he was as young for a man as Jane Brown was for a nurse—the man lay quite still for a moment. Then:

"I'm sorry to undeceive you," he said. "But my right leg is off."

He said it lightly, because that is the way he took things. But he had a strange singing in his ears.

"I'm afraid it's broken. But you still have it." She smiled. She had a very friendly smile. "Have you any pain anywhere?"

He was terribly afraid she would go away and leave him, so, although he was quite comfortable, owing to a hypodermic he had had, he groaned slightly. He was, at that time, not particularly interested in Jane Brown, but he did not want to be alone. He closed his eyes and said feebly:

"Water!"

She gave him a teaspoonful, bending over him and being careful not to spill it down his neck. Her uniform crackled when she moved. It had rather too much starch in it.

The man, whose name was Middleton, closed his eyes. Owing to the morphia, he had at least a hundred things he wished to discuss. The trouble was to fix on one out of the lot.

"I feel like a bit of conversation," he observed. "How about you?"

Then he saw that she was busy again. She held an old-fashioned hunting-case watch in her hand, and her eyes were fixed on his chest. At each rise and fall of the coverlet her lips moved. Mr. Middleton, who was feeling

wonderful, experimented. He drew four very rapid breaths, and four very slow ones. He was rewarded by seeing her rush to a table and write something on a sheet of yellow paper.

"Resparation, very iregular," was what she wrote. She was not a particularly good speller.

After that Mr. Middleton slept for what he felt was a day and a night. It was really ten minutes by the hunting-case watch. Just long enough for the Senior Surgical Interne, known in the school as the S. S. I., to wander in, feel his pulse, approve of Jane Brown, and go out.

Jane Brown had risen nervously when he came in, and had proffered him the order book and a clean towel, as she had been instructed. He had, however, required neither. He glanced over the record, changed the spelling of "resparation," arranged his tie at the mirror, took another look at Jane Brown, and went out. He had not spoken.

It was when his white-linen clad figure went out that Middleton wakened and found it was the same day. He felt at once like conversation, and he began immediately. But the morphia did a curious thing to him. He was never afterward able to explain it. It made him create. He lay there and invented for Jane Brown a fictitious person, who was himself. This person, he said, was a newspaper reporter, who had been sent to report the warehouse fire. He had got too close, and a wall had come down on him. He invented the newspaper, too, but, as Jane Brown had come from somewhere else, she did not notice this.

In fact, after a time he felt that she was not as really interested as she might have been, so he introduced a love element. He was, as has been said, of those who

believe that nurses go into hospitals because of being blighted. So he introduced a Mabel, suppressing her other name, and boasted, in a way he afterward remembered with horror, that Mabel was in love with him. She was, he related, something or other on his paper.

At the end of two hours of babbling, a businesslike person in a cap—the Probationer wears no cap—relieved Jane Brown, and spilled some beef tea down his neck.

Now, Mr. Middleton knew no one in that city. He had been motoring through, and he had, on seeing the warehouse burning, abandoned his machine for a closer view. He had left it with the engine running, and, as a matter of fact, it ran for four hours, when it died of starvation, and was subsequently interred in a city garage. However, he owned a number of cars, so he wasted no thought on that one. He was a great deal more worried about his eyebrows, and, naturally, about his leg.

When he had been in the hospital ten hours it occurred to him to notify his family. But he put it off for two reasons: first, it would be a lot of trouble; second, he had no reason to think they particularly wanted to know. They all had such a lot of things to do, such as bridge and opening country houses and going to the Springs. They were really overwhelmed, without anything new, and they had never been awfully interested in him anyhow.

He was not at all bitter about it.

That night Mr. Middleton—but he was now officially "Twenty-two," by that system of metonymy which designates a hospital private patient by the number of his room—that night "Twenty-two" had rather a bad time, between his leg and his conscience. Both carried on disgracefully. His leg stabbed, and his conscience reminded him of Mabel, and that if one is going to lie, there should

at least be a reason. To lie out of the whole cloth——!

However, toward morning, with what he felt was the entire pharmacopœia inside him, and his tongue feeling like a tar roof, he made up his mind to stick to his story, at least as far as the young lady with the old-fashioned watch was concerned. He had a sort of creed, which shows how young he was, that one should never explain to a girl.

There was another reason still. There had been a faint sparkle in the eyes of the young lady with the watch while he was lying to her. He felt that she was seeing him in heroic guise, and the thought pleased him. It was novel.

To tell the truth, he had been getting awfully bored with himself since he left college. Everything he tried to do, somebody else could do so much better. And he comforted himself with this, that he would have been a journalist if he could, or at least have published a newspaper. He knew what was wrong with about a hundred newspapers.

He decided to confess about Mabel, but to hold fast to journalism. Then he lay in bed and watched for the Probationer to come back.

However, here things began to go wrong. He did not see Jane Brown again. There were day nurses and night nurses and reliefs, and *internes* and Staff and the Head Nurse and the First Assistant and—everything but Jane Brown. And at last he inquired for her.

"The first day I was in here," he said to Miss Willoughby, "there was a little girl here without a cap. I don't know her name. But I haven't seen her since."

Miss Willoughby, who, if she had been disappointed in love, had certainly had time to forget it, Miss Willoughby reflected.

"Without a cap? Then it was only one of the probationers."

"You don't remember which one?"

But she only observed that probationers were always coming and going, and it wasn't worth while learning names until they were accepted. And that, anyhow, probationers should never be sent to private patients, who are paying a lot and want the best.

"Really," she added, "I don't know what the school is coming to. Since this war in Europe every girl wants to wear a uniform and be ready to go to the front if we have trouble. All sorts of silly children are applying. We have one now, on this very floor, not a day over nineteen."

"Who is she?" asked Middleton. He felt that this was the one. She was so exactly the sort Miss Willoughby would object to.

"Jane Brown," snapped Miss Willoughby. "A little, namby-pamby, mush-and-milk creature, afraid of her own shadow."

Now, Jane Brown, at that particular moment, was sitting in her little room in the dormitory, with the old watch ticking on the stand so she would not over-stay her off duty. She was aching with fatigue from her head, with its smooth and shiny hair, to her feet, which were in a bowl of witch hazel and hot water. And she was crying over a letter she was writing.

Jane Brown had just come from her first death. It had taken place in H ward, where she daily washed window-sills, and disinfected stands, and carried dishes in and out. And it had not been what she had expected. In the first place, the man had died for hours. She had never heard of this. She had thought of death as coming quickly—a glance of farewell, closing eyes, and

—rest. But for hours and hours the struggle had gone on, a fight for breath that all the ward could hear. And he had not closed his eyes at all. They were turned up, and staring.

The Probationer had suffered horribly, and at last she had gone behind the screen and folded her hands and closed her eyes, and said very low:

"Dear God—please take him quickly."

He had stopped breathing almost immediately. But that may have been a coincidence.

However, she was not writing that home. Between gasps she was telling the humors of visiting day in the ward, and of how kind every one was to her, which, if not entirely true, was not entirely untrue. They were kind enough when they had time to be, or when they remembered her. Only they did not always remember her.

She ended by saying that she was quite sure they meant to accept her when her three months were up. It was frightfully necessary that she be accepted.

She sent messages to all the little town, which had seen her off almost *en masse*. And she added that the probationers received the regular first-year allowance of eight dollars a month, and she could make it do nicely —which was quite true, unless she kept on breaking thermometers when she shook them down.

At the end she sent her love to everybody, including even worthless Johnny Fraser, who cut the grass and scrubbed the porches; and, of course, to Doctor Willie. He was called Doctor Willie because his father, who had taken him into partnership long ago, was Doctor Will. It never had seemed odd, although Doctor Willie was now sixty-five, and a saintly soul.

Curiously enough, her letter was dated April first. Under that very date, and about that time of the day,

a health officer in a near-by borough was making an entry regarding certain colored gentlemen shipped north from Louisiana to work on a railroad. Opposite the name of one Augustus Baird he put a cross. This indicated that Augustus Baird had not been vaccinated.

By the sixth of April "Twenty-two" had progressed from splints to a plaster cast, and was being most awfully bored. Jane Brown had not returned, and there was a sort of relentless maturity about the nurses who looked after him that annoyed him.

Lying there, he had a good deal of time to study them, and somehow his recollection of the girl with the hunting-case watch did not seem to fit her in with these kindly and efficient women. He could not, for instance, imagine her patronizing the Senior Surgical Interne in a deferential but unmistakable manner, or good-naturedly bullying the First Assistant, who was a nervous person in shoes too small for her, as to their days off duty.

Twenty-two began to learn things about the hospital. For instance, the day nurse, while changing his pillow slips, would observe that Nineteen was going to be operated on that day, and close her lips over further information. But when the afternoon relief, while giving him his toothbrush after lunch, said there was a most interesting gall-stone case in nineteen, and the night nurse, in reply to a direct question, told Nineteen's name, but nothing else, Twenty-two had a fair working knowledge of the day's events.

He seemed to learn about everything but Jane Brown. He knew when a new baby came, and was even given a glimpse of one, showing, he considered, about the color and general contour of a maraschino cherry. And he learned soon that the god of the hospital is the Staff, although worship did not blind the nurses to their weak-

nesses. Thus the older men, who had been trained before the day of asepsis and modern methods, were revered but carefully watched. They would get out of scrubbing their hands whenever they could, and they hated their beards tied up with gauze. The nurses, keen, competent and kindly, but shrewd, too, looked after these elderly recalcitrants; loved a few, hated some, and presented to the world unbroken ranks for their defence.

Twenty-two learned also the story of the First Assistant, who was in love with one of the Staff, who was married, and did not care for her anyhow. So she wore tight shoes, and was always beautifully waved, and read Browning.

She had a way of coming in and saying brightly, as if to reassure herself:

"Good morning, Twenty-two. Well, God is still in His heaven, and all's well with the world."

Twenty-two got to feeling awfully uncomfortable about her. She used to bring him flowers and sit down a moment to rest her feet, which generally stung. And she would stop in the middle of a sentence and look into space, but always with a determined smile.

He felt awfully uncomfortable. She was so neat and so efficient—and so tragic. He tried to imagine being hopelessly in love, and trying to live on husks of Browning. Not even Mrs. Browning.

The mind is a curious thing. Suddenly, from thinking of Mrs. Browning, he thought of N. Jane Brown. Of course not by that ridiculous name. He had learned that she was stationed on that floor. And in the same flash he saw the Senior Surgical Interne swanking about in white ducks and just the object for a probationer to fall in love with. He lay there, and pulled the beginning

of the new moustache, and reflected. The First Assistant was pinning a spray of hyacinth in her cap.

"Look here," he said. "Why can't I be put in a wheeled chair and get about? One that I can manipulate myself," he added craftily.

She demurred. Indeed, everybody demurred when he put it up to them. But he had gone through the world to the age of twenty-four, getting his own way about ninety-seven per cent. of the time. He got it this time, consisting of a new cast, which he named Elizabeth, and a roller-chair, and he spent a full day learning how to steer himself around.

Then, on the afternoon of the third day, rolling back toward the elevator and the *terra incognita* which lay beyond, he saw a sign. He stared at it blankly, because it interfered considerably with a plan he had in mind. The sign was of tin, and it said:

"No private patients allowed beyond here."

Twenty-two sat in his chair and stared at it. The plaster cast stretched out in front of him, and was covered by a gray blanket. With the exception of the trifling formality of trousers, he was well dressed in a sack coat, a shirt, waistcoat, and a sort of college-boy collar and tie, which one of the orderlies had purchased for him. His other things were in that extremely expensive English car which the city was storing.

. The plain truth is that Twenty-two was looking for Jane Brown. Since she had not come to him, he must go to her. He particularly wanted to set her right as to Mabel. And he felt, too, that that trick about respirations had not been entirely fair.

He was, of course, not in the slightest degree in love with her. He had only seen her once, and then he had had a broken leg and a quarter grain of morphia and

a burned moustache and no eyebrows left to speak of.

But there was the sign. It was hung to a nail beside the elevator shaft. And far beyond, down the corridor, was somebody in a blue dress and no cap. It might be anybody, but again——

Twenty-two looked around. The elevator had just gone down at its usual rate of a mile every two hours. In the convalescent parlor, where private patients *en negligée* complained about the hospital food, the nurse in charge was making a new cap. Over all the hospital brooded an after-luncheon peace.

Twenty-two wheeled up under the sign and considered his average of ninety-seven per cent. Followed in sequence these events: (a) Twenty-two wheeled back to the parlor, where old Mr. Simond's cane leaned against a table, and, while engaging that gentleman in conversation, possessed himself of the cane. (b) Wheeled back to the elevator. (c) Drew cane from beneath blanket. (d) Unhooked sign with cane and concealed both under blanket. (e) Worked his way back along the forbidden territory, past I and J until he came to H ward.

Jane Brown was in H ward.

She was alone, and looking very professional. There is nothing quite so professional as a new nurse. She had, indeed, reached a point where, if she took a pulse three times, she got somewhat similar results. There had been a time when they had run something like this: 56—80—120——

Jane Brown was taking pulses. It was a visiting day, and all the beds had fresh white spreads, tucked in neatly at the foot. In the exact middle of the centre table with its red cloth, was a vase of yellow tulips. The sun came in and turned them to golden flame.

Jane Brown was on duty alone and taking pulses with one eye while she watched the visitors with the other. She did the watching better than she did the pulses. For instance, she was distinctly aware that Stanislas Krzykolski's wife, in the bed next the end, had just slid a half-dozen greasy cakes, sprinkled with sugar, under his pillow. She knew, however, that not only grease but love was in those cakes, and she did not intend to confiscate them until after Mrs. Krzykolski had gone.

More visitors came. Shuffling and self-conscious mill-workers, walking on their toes; draggled women; a Chinese boy; a girl with a rouged face and a too confident manner. A hum of conversation hung over the long room. The sunlight came in and turned to glory, not only the tulips and the red tablecloth, but also the brass basins, the fireplace fender, and the Probationer's hair.

Twenty-two sat unnoticed in the doorway. A young girl, very lame, with a mandolin, had just entered the ward. In the little stir of her arrival, Twenty-two had time to see that Jane Brown was worth even all the trouble he had taken, and more. Really, to see Jane Brown properly, she should have always been seen in the sun. She was that sort.

The lame girl sat down in the centre of the ward, and the buzz died away. She was not pretty, and she was very nervous. Twenty-two frowned a trifle.

"Poor devils," he said to himself. But Jane Brown put away her hunting-case watch, and the lame girl swept the ward with soft eyes that had in them a pity that was almost a benediction.

Then she sang. Her voice was like her eyes, very sweet and rather frightened, but tender. And suddenly something a little hard and selfish in Twenty-two began

to be horribly ashamed of itself. And, for no earthly reason in the world, he began to feel like a cumberer of the earth. Before she had finished the first song, he was thinking that perhaps when he was getting about again, he might run over to France for a few months in the ambulance service. A fellow really ought to do his bit.

At just about that point Jane Brown turned and saw him. And although he had run all these risks to get to her, and even then had an extremely cold tin sign lying on his knee under the blanket, at first she did not know him. The shock of this was almost too much for him. In all sorts of places people were glad to see him, especially women. He was astonished, but it was good for him.

She recognized him almost immediately, however, and flushed a little, because she knew he had no business there. She was awfully bound up with rules.

"I came back on purpose to see you," said Twenty-two, when at last the lame girl had limped away. "Because, that day I came in and you looked after me, you know, I—must have talked a lot of nonsense."

"Morphia makes some people talk," she said. It was said in an exact copy of the ward nurse's voice, a frightfully professional and impersonal tone.

"But," said Twenty-two, stirring uneasily, "I said a lot that wasn't true. You may have forgotten, but I haven't. Now that about a girl named Mabel, for instance——"

He stirred again, because, after all, what did it matter what he had said? She was gazing over the ward. She was not interested in him. She had almost forgotten him. And as he stirred Mr. Simond's cane fell out. It was immediately followed by the tin sign, which only gradually subsided, face up, on the bare floor, in a slowly diminishing series of crashes.

Jane Brown stooped and picked them both up and placed them on his lap. Then, very stern, she marched out of the ward into the corridor, and there subsided into quiet hysterics of mirth. Twenty-two, who hated to be laughed at, followed her in the chair, looking extremely annoyed.

"What else was I to do?" he demanded, after a time. "Of course, if you report it, I'm gone."

"What do you intend to do with it now?" she asked. All her professional manner had gone, and she looked alarmingly young.

"If I put it back, I'll only have to steal it again. Because I am absolutely bored to death in that room of mine. I have played a thousand games of solitaire."

The Probationer looked around. There was no one in sight.

"I should think," she suggested, "that if you slipped it behind that radiator, no one would ever know about it."

Fortunately, the ambulance gong set up a clamor below the window just then, and no one heard one of the hospital's cherished rules going, as one may say, into the discard.

The Probationer leaned her nose against the window and looked down. A colored man was being carried in on a stretcher. Although she did not know it—indeed, never did know it—the colored gentleman in question was one Augustus Baird.

Soon afterward Twenty-two squeaked—his chair needed oiling—squeaked back to his lonely room and took stock. He found that he was rid of Mabel, but was still a reporter, hurt in doing his duty. He had let this go because he saw that duty was a sort of fetish with

the Probationer. And since just now she liked him for what she thought he was, why not wait to tell her until she liked him for himself?

He hoped she was going to like him, because she was going to see him a lot. Also, he liked her even better than he had remembered that he did. She had a sort of thoroughbred look that he liked. And he liked the way her hair was soft and straight and shiny. And he liked the way she was all business and no nonsense. And the way she counted pulses, with her lips moving and a little frown between her eyebrows. And he liked her for being herself—which is, after all, the reason why most men like the women they like, and extremely reasonable.

The First Assistant loaned him Browning that afternoon, and he read "Pippa Passes." He thought Pippa must have looked like the Probationer.

The Head was a bit querulous that evening. The Heads of Training Schools get that way now and then, although they generally reveal it only to the First Assistant. They have to do so many irreconcilable things, such as keeping down expenses while keeping up requisitions, and remembering the different sorts of sutures the Staff likes, and receiving the Ladies' Committee, and conducting prayers and lectures, and knowing by a swift survey of a ward that the stands have been carbolized and all the toenails cut. Because it is amazing the way toenails grow in bed.

The Head would probably never have come out flatly, but she had a wretched cold, and the First Assistant was giving her a mustard footbath, which was very hot. The Head sat up with a blanket over her shoulders, and read lists while her feet took on the blush of ripe apples. And at last she said:

"How is that Probationer with the ridiculous name getting along?"

The First Assistant poured in more hot water.

"N. Jane?" she asked. "Well, she's a nice little thing, and she seems willing. But, of course——"

The Head groaned.

"Nineteen!" she said. "And no character at all. I detest fluttery people. She flutters the moment I go into the ward."

The First Assistant sat back and felt of her cap, which was of starched tulle and was softening a bit from the steam. She felt a thrill of pity for the Probationer. She, too, had once felt fluttery when the Head came in.

"She is very anxious to stay," she observed. "She works hard, too. I——"

"She has no personality, no decision," said the Head, and sneezed twice. She was really very wretched, and so she was unfair. "She is pretty and sweet. But I cannot run my training school on prettiness and sweetness. Has Doctor Harvard come in yet?"

"I—I think not," said the First Assistant. She looked up quickly, but the Head was squeezing a lemon in a cup of hot water beside her.

Now, while the Head was having a footbath, and Twenty-two was having a stock-taking, and Augustus Baird was having his symptoms recorded, Jane Brown was having a shock.

She heard an unmistakable shuffling of feet in the corridor.

Sounds take on much significance in a hospital, and probationers study them, especially footsteps. It gives them a moment sometimes to think what to do next.

Internes, for instance, frequently wear rubber soles on their white shoes and have a way of slipping up on one

And the engineer goes on a half run, generally accompanied by the clanking of a tool or two. And the elevator man runs, too, because generally the bell is ringing. And ward patients shuffle about in carpet slippers, and the pharmacy clerk has a brisk young step, inclined to be jaunty.

But it is the Staff which is always unmistakable. It comes along the corridor deliberately, inexorably. It plants its feet firmly and with authority. It moves with the inevitability of fate, with the pride of royalty, with the ease of the best made-to-order boots. The ring of a Staff member's heel on a hospital corridor is the most authoritative sound on earth. He may be the gentlest soul in the world, but he will tread like royalty.

But this was not Staff. Jane Brown knew this sound, and it filled her with terror. It was the scuffling of four pairs of feet, carefully instructed not to keep step. It meant, in other words, a stretcher. But perhaps it was not coming to her. Ah, but it was!

Panic seized Jane Brown. She knew there were certain things to do, but they went out of her mind like a cat out of a cellar window. However, the ward was watching. It had itself, generally speaking, come in feet first. It knew the procedure. So, instructed by low voices from the beds around, Jane Brown feverishly tore the spread off the emergency bed and drew it somewhat apart from its fellows. Then she stood back and waited.

Came in four officers from the police patrol. Came in the Senior Surgical Interne. Came two convalescents from the next ward to stare in at the door. Came the stretcher, containing a quiet figure under a gray blanket.

Twenty-two, at that exact moment, was putting a queen on a ten spot and pretending there is nothing wrong about cheating oneself.

In a very short time the quiet figure was on the bed, and the Senior Surgical Interne was writing in the order book: "Prepare for operation."

Jane Brown read it over his shoulder, which is not etiquette.

"But—I can't," she quavered. "I don't know how. I won't touch him. He's—he's bloody!"

Then she took another look at the bed and she saw—Johnny Fraser.

Now Johnny had, in his small way, played a part in the Probationer's life, such as occasionally scrubbing porches or borrowing a half dollar or being suspected of stealing the eggs from the henhouse. But *that* Johnny Fraser had been a wicked, smiling imp, much given to sitting in the sun.

Here lay another Johnny Fraser, a quiet one, who might never again feel the warm earth through his worthless clothes on his worthless young body. A Johnny of closed eyes and slow, noisy breathing.

"Why, Johnny!" said the Probationer, in a strangled voice.

The Senior Surgical Interne was interested.

"Know him?" he said.

"He is a boy from home." She was still staring at this quiet, un-impudent figure.

The Senior Surgical Interne eyed her with an eye that was only partially professional. Then he went to the medicine closet and poured a bit of aromatic ammonia into a glass.

"Sit down and drink this," he said, in a very masculine voice. He liked to feel that he could do something for her. Indeed, there was something almost proprietary in the way he took her pulse.

Some time after the early hospital supper that evening

Twenty-two, having oiled his chair with some olive oil from his tray, made a clandestine trip through the twilight of the corridor back of the elevator shaft. To avoid scandal he pretended interest in other wards, but he gravitated, as a needle to the pole, to H. And there he found the Probationer, looking rather strained, and mothering a quiet figure on a bed.

He was a trifle puzzled at her distress, for she made no secret of Johnny's status in the community. What he did not grasp was that Johnny Fraser was a link between this new and rather terrible world of the hospital and home. It was not Johnny alone, it was Johnny scrubbing a home porch and doing it badly, it was Johnny in her father's old clothes, it was Johnny fishing for catfish in the creek, or lending his pole to one of the little brothers whose pictures were on her table in the dormitory.

Twenty-two felt a certain depression. He reflected rather grimly that he had been ten days missing and that no one had apparently given a hang whether he turned up or not.

"Is he going to live?" he inquired. He could see that the ward nurse had an eye on him, and was preparing for retreat.

"O yes," said Jane Brown. "I think so now. The *interne* says they have had a message from Doctor Willie. He is coming." There was a beautiful confidence in her tone.

Things moved very fast with the Probationer for the next twenty-four hours. Doctor Willie came, looking weary but smiling benevolently. Jane Brown met him in a corridor and kissed him, as, indeed, she had been in the habit of doing since her babyhood.

"Where is the young rascal?" said Doctor Willie. "Up

to his old tricks, Nellie, and struck by a train." He put a hand under her chin, which is never done to the members of the training school in a hospital, and searched her face with his kind old eyes. "Well, how does it go, Nellie?"

Jane Brown swallowed hard.

"All right," she managed. "They want to operate, Doctor Willie."

"Tut!" he said. "Always in a hurry, these hospitals. We'll wait a while, I think."

"Is everybody well at home?"

It had come to her, you see, what comes to every nurse once in her training—the thinness of the veil, the terror of calamity, the fear of death.

"All well. And——" he glanced around. Only the Senior Surgical Interne was in sight, and he was out of hearing. "Look here, Nellie," he said, "I've got a dozen fresh eggs for you in my satchel. Your mother sent them."

She nearly lost her professional manner again then. But she only asked him to warn the boys about automobiles and riding on the backs of wagons.

Had any one said Twenty-two to her, she would not have known what was meant. Not just then, anyhow.

In the doctor's room that night the Senior Surgical Interne lighted a cigarette and telephoned to the operating room.

"That trephining's off," he said, briefly.

Then he fell into conversation with the Senior Medical, who was rather worried about a case listed on the books as Augustus Baird, colored.

Twenty-two did not sleep very well that night. He needed exercise, he felt. But there was something else.

Miss Brown had been just a shade too ready to accept his explanation about Mabel, he felt, so ready that he feared she had been more polite than sincere. Probably she still believed there was a Mabel. Not that it mattered, except that he hated to make a fool of himself. He roused once in the night and was quite sure he heard her voice down the corridor. He knew this must be wrong, because they would not make her work all day and all night, too.

But, as it happened, it *was* Jane Brown. The hospital provided plenty of sleeping time, but now and then there was a slip-up and somebody paid. There had been a night operation, following on a busy day, and the operating-room nurses needed help. Out of a sound sleep the night Assistant had summoned Jane Brown to clean instruments.

At five o'clock that morning she was still sitting on a stool beside a glass table, polishing instruments which made her shiver. All around were things that were spattered with blood. But she looked anything but fluttery. She was a very grim and determined young person just then, and professional beyond belief. The other things, like washing window-sills and cutting toe-nails, had had no significance. But here she was at last on the edge of mercy. Some one who might have died had lived that night because of this room, and these instruments, and willing hands.

She hoped she would always have willing hands.

She looked very pale at breakfast the next morning, and rather older. Also she had a new note of authority in her voice when she telephoned the kitchen and demanded H ward's soft-boiled eggs. She washed window-sills that morning again, but no longer was there rebellion in her soul. She was seeing suddenly how the hospital

required all these menial services, which were not menial at all but only preparation; that there were little tasks and big ones, and one graduated from the one to the other.

She took some flowers from the ward bouquet and put them beside Johnny's bed—Johnny, who was still lying quiet, with closed eyes.

The Senior Surgical Interne did a dressing in the ward that morning. He had been in to see Augustus Baird, and he felt uneasy. He vented it on Tony, the Italian, with a stiletto thrust in his neck, by jerking at the adhesive. Tony wailed, and Jane Brown, who was the "dirty" nurse—which does not mean what it appears to mean, but is the person who receives the soiled dressings —Jane Brown gritted her teeth.

"Keep quiet," said the S. S. I., who was a good fellow, but had never been stabbed in the neck for running away with somebody else's wife.

"Eet hurt," said Tony. "Ow."

Jane Brown turned very pink.

"Why don't you let me cut it off properly?" she said, in a strangled tone.

The total result of this was that Jane Brown was reprimanded by the First Assistant, and learned some things about ethics.

"But," she protested, "it was both stupid and cruel. And if I know I am right——"

"How are you to know you are right?" demanded the First Assistant, crossly. Her feet were stinging. "'A little knowledge is a dangerous thing.'" This was a favorite quotation of hers, although not Browning. "Nurses in hospitals are there to carry out the doctor's orders. Not to think or to say what they think unless they are asked. To be intelligent, but——"

"But not too intelligent!" said the Probationer. "I see."

This was duly reported to the Head, who observed that it was merely what she had expected and extremely pert. Her cold was hardly any better.

It was taking the Probationer quite a time to realize her own total lack of significance in all this. She had been accustomed to men who rose when a woman entered a room and remained standing as long as she stood. And now she was in a new world, where she had to rise and remain standing while a cocky youth in ducks, just out of medical college, sauntered in with his hands in his pockets and took a *boutonnière* from the ward bouquet.

It was probably extremely good for her.

She was frightfully tired that day, and toward evening the little glow of service began to fade. There seemed to be nothing to do for Johnny but to wait. Doctor Willie had seemed to think that nature would clear matters up there, and had requested no operation. She smoothed beds and carried cups of water and broke another thermometer. And she put the eggs from home in the ward pantry and made egg-nogs of them for Stanislas Krzykolski, who was unaccountably upset as to stomach.

She had entirely forgotten Twenty-two. He had stayed away all that day, in a sort of faint hope that she would miss him. But she had not. She was feeling rather worried, to tell the truth. For a Staff surgeon, going through the ward, had stopped by Johnny's bed and examined the pupils of his eyes, and had then exchanged a glance with the Senior Surgical Interne that had perplexed her.

In the chapel at prayers that evening all around her the nurses sat and rested, their tired hands folded in their

laps. They talked a little among themselves, but it was only a buzzing that reached the Probationer faintly. Some one near was talking about something that was missing.

"Gone?" she said. "Of course it is gone. The bath-room man reported it to me and I went and looked."

"But who in the world would take it?"

"My dear," said the first speaker, "who *does* take things in a hospital, anyhow? Only——a tin sign!"

It was then that the Head came in. She swept in; her gray gown, her gray hair gave her a majesty that filled the Probationer with awe. Behind her came the First Assistant with the prayer-book and hymnal. The Head believed in form.

Jane Brown offered up a little prayer that night for Johnny Fraser, and another little one without words, that Doctor Willie was right. She sat and rested her weary young body, and remembered how Doctor Willie was loved and respected, and the years he had cared for the whole countryside. And the peace of the quiet room, with the Easter lilies on the tiny altar, brought rest to her.

It was when prayers were over that the Head made her announcement. She rose and looked over the shadowy room, where among the rows of white caps only the Probationer's head was uncovered, and she said:

"I have an announcement to make to the training school. One which I regret, and which will mean a certain amount of hardship and deprivation.

"A case of contagion has been discovered in one of the wards, and it has been considered necessary to quarantine the hospital. The doors were closed at seven-thirty this evening."

II

Considering that he could not get out anyhow, Twenty-two took the news of the quarantine calmly. He reflected that, if he was shut in, Jane Brown was shut in also. He had a wicked hope, at the beginning, that the Senior Surgical Interne had been shut out, but at nine o'clock that evening that young gentleman showed up at the door of his room, said "Cheery-o," came in, helped himself to a cigarette, gave a professional glance at Twenty-two's toes, which were all that was un-plastered of the leg, and departing threw back over his shoulder his sole conversational effort:

"Hell of a mess, isn't it?"

Twenty-two took up again gloomily the book he was reading, which was on Diseases of the Horse, from the hospital library. He was in the midst of Glanders.

He had, during most of that day, been making up his mind to let his family know where he was. He did not think they cared, particularly. He had no illusions about that. But there was something about Jane Brown which made him feel like doing the decent thing. It annoyed him frightfully, but there it was. She was so eminently the sort of person who believed in doing the decent thing.

So, about seven o'clock, he had sent the orderly out for stamps and paper. He imagined that Jane Brown would not think writing home on hospital stationery a good way to break bad news. But the orderly had stopped for a chat at the engine house, and had ended by playing a game of dominoes. When, at ten o'clock, he had returned to the hospital entrance, the richer by a quarter and a glass of beer, he had found a strange policeman on the hospital steps, and the doors locked.

The quarantine was on.

Now there are different sorts of quarantines. There is the sort where a trained nurse and the patient are shut up in a room and bath, and the family only opens the door and peers in. And there is the sort where the front door has a placard on it, and the family goes in and out the back way, and takes a street-car to the office the same as usual. And there is the hospital quarantine, which is the real thing, because hospitals are expected to do things thoroughly.

So our hospital was closed up as tight as a jar of preserves. There were policemen at all the doors, quite suddenly. They locked the doors and put the keys in their pockets, and from that time on they opened them only to pass things in, such as newspapers or milk or groceries or the braver members of the Staff. But not to let anything out—except the Staff. Supposedly Staffs do not carry germs.

And, indeed, even the Staff was not keen about entering. It thought of a lot of things it ought to do about visiting time, and prescribed considerably over the telephone.

At first there was a great deal of confusion, because quite a number of people had been out on various errands when it happened. And they came back, and protested to the office that they had only their uniforms on under their coats, and three dollars; or their slippers and no hats. Or that they would sue the city. One or two of them got quite desperate and tried to crawl up the fire-escape, but failed.

This is of interest chiefly because it profoundly affected Jane Brown. Miss McAdoo, her ward nurse, had debated whether to wash her hair that evening, or to take a walk. She had decided on the walk, and was therefore shut out, along with the Junior Medical, the kitchen

cat, the Superintendent's mother-in-law and six other nurses.

The next morning the First Assistant gave Jane Brown charge of H ward.

"It's very irregular," she said. "I don't exactly know —you have only one bad case, haven't you?"

"Only Johnny."

The First Assistant absent-mindedly ran a finger over the top of a table, and examined it for dust.

"Of course," she said, "it's a great chance for you. Show that you can handle this ward, and you are practically safe."

Jane Brown drew a long breath and stood up very straight. Then she ran her eye over the ward. There was something vaguely reminiscent of Miss McAdoo in her glance.

Twenty-two made three brief excursions back along the corridor that first day of the quarantine. But Jane Brown was extremely professional and very busy. There was an air of discipline over the ward. Let a man but so much as turn over in bed and show an inch of blanket, and she pounced on the bed and reduced it to the most horrible neatness. All the beds looked as if they had been made up with a carpenter's square.

On the third trip, however, Jane Brown was writing at the table. Twenty-two wheeled himself into the doorway and eyed her with disapproval.

"What do you mean by sitting down?" he demanded sarcastically. "Don't you know that now you are in charge you ought to keep moving?"

To which she replied, absently:

"Three buttered toasts, two dry toasts, six soft boiled eggs, and twelve soups." She was working on the diet slips.

Then she smiled at him. They were quite old friends already. It is curious about love and friendship and all those kindred emotions. They do not grow nearly so fast when people are together as when they are apart. It is an actual fact that the growth of many an intimacy is checked by meetings. Because when people are apart it is what they *are* that counts, and when they are together it is what they do and say and look like. Many a beautiful affair has been ruined because, just as it was going along well, the principals met again.

However, all this merely means that Twenty-two and Jane Brown were infinitely closer friends than four or five meetings really indicate.

The ward was very quiet on this late afternoon call of his save for Johnny's heavy breathing. There is a quiet hour in a hospital, between afternoon temperatures and the ringing of the bell which means that the suppers for the wards are on their way—a quiet hour when over the long rows of beds broods the peace of the ending day.

It is a melancholy hour, too, because from the streets come faintly the echo of feet hurrying home, the eager trot of a horse bound stableward. To those in the eddy that is the ward comes at this time a certain heaviness of spirit. Poor thing though home may have been, they long for it.

In H ward that late afternoon there was a wave of homesickness in the air, and on the part of those men who were up and about, who shuffled up and down the ward in flapping carpet slippers, an inclination to mutiny.

"How did they take it?" Twenty-two inquired.

She puckered her eyebrows.

"They don't like it," she confessed. "Some of them were about ready to go home, and it—*Tony!*" she called sharply.

For Tony, who had been cunningly standing by the window leading to a fire-escape, had flung the window up and was giving unmistakable signs of climbing out and returning to the other man's wife.

"Tony!" she called, and ran. Tony scrambled up on the sill. A sort of titter ran over the ward and Tony, now on the platform outside, waved a derisive hand through the window.

"Good-bye, mees!" he said, and—disappeared.

It was not a very dramatic thing, after all. It is chiefly significant for its effect on Twenty-two, who was obliged to sit frozen with horror and cursing his broken leg, while Jane Brown raced a brown little Italian down the fire-escape and caught him at the foot of it. Tony took a look around. The courtyard gates were closed and a policeman sat outside on a camp-stool reading the newspaper. Tony smiled sheepishly and surrendered.

Some seconds later Tony and Jane Brown appeared on the platform outside. Jane Brown had Tony by the ear, and she stopped long enough outside to exchange the ear for his shoulder, by which she shook him, vigorously.

Twenty-two turned his chair around and wheeled himself back to his room. He was filled with a cold rage—because she might have fallen on the fire-escape and been killed; because he had not been able to help her; because she was there, looking after the derelicts of life, when the world was beautiful outside, and she was young; because to her he was just Twenty-two and nothing more.

He had seen her exactly six times.

Jane Brown gave the ward a little talk that night before the night nurse reported. She stood in the centre of the long room, beside the tulips, and said that she was going to be alone there, and that she would have to put the situation up to their sense of honor. If they tried

to escape, they would hurt her. Also they would surely be caught and brought back. And, because she believed in a combination of faith and deeds, she took three nails and the linen-room flatiron, and nailed shut the window onto the fire-escape.

After that, she brushed crumbs out of the beds with a whiskbroom and rubbed a few backs with alcohol, and smoothed the counterpanes, and hung over Johnny's unconscious figure for a little while, giving motherly pats to his flat pillow and worrying considerably because there was so little about him to remind her of the Johnny she knew at home.

After that she sat down and made up her records for the night nurse. The ward understood, and was perfectly good, trying hard not to muss its pillows or wrinkle the covers. And struggling, too, with a new idea. They were prisoners. No more release cards would brighten the days. For an indefinite period the old Frenchman would moan at night, and Bader the German would snore, and the Chinaman would cough. Indefinitely they would eat soft-boiled eggs and rice and beef-tea and cornstarch.

The ward felt extremely low in its mind.

That night the Senior Surgical Interne went in to play cribbage with Twenty-two, and received a lecture on leaving a young girl alone in H with a lot of desperate men. They both grew rather heated over the discussion and forgot to play cribbage at all. Twenty-two lay awake half the night, because he had seen clearly that the Senior Surgical Interne was interested in Jane Brown also, and would probably loaf around H most of the time since there would be no new cases now. It was a crowning humiliation to have the night nurse apply to the Senior Surgical Interne for a sleeping powder for him!

Toward morning he remembered that he had promised to write out from memory one of the Sonnets from the Portuguese for the First Assistant, and he turned on the light and jotted down two lines of it. He wrote:

"For we two look two ways, and cannot shine
With the same sunlight on our brow and hair."—

And then sat up in bed for half an hour looking at it because he was so awfully afraid it was true of Jane Brown and himself. Not, of course, that he wanted to shine at all. It was the looking two ways that hurt.

The next evening the nurses took their airing on the roof, which was a sooty place with a parapet, and in the courtyard, which was an equally sooty place with a wispy fountain. And because the whole situation was new, they formed in little groups on the wooden benches and sang, hands folded on white aprons, heads lifted, eyes upturned to where, above the dimly lighted windows, the stars peered palely through the smoke.

The S. S. I. sauntered out. He had thought he saw the Probationer from his window, and in the new relaxation of discipline he saw a chance to join her. But the figure he had thought he recognized proved to be some one else, and he fell to wandering alone up and down the courtyard.

He was trying to work out this problem: would the advantage of marrying early and thus being considered eligible for certain cases, offset the disadvantage of the extra expense?

He decided to marry early and hang the expense.

The days went by, three, then four, and a little line of tension deepened around Jane Brown's mouth. Perhaps it has not been mentioned that she had a fighting nose,

short and straight, and a wistful mouth. For Johnny Fraser was still lying in a stupor.

Jane Brown felt that something was wrong. Doctor Willie came in once or twice, making the long trip without complaint and without hope of payment. All his busy life he had worked for the sake of work, and not for reward. He called her "Nellie," to the delight of the ward, which began to love him, and he spent a long hour each time by Johnny's bed. But the Probationer was quick to realize that the Senior Surgical Interne disapproved of him.

That young man had developed a tendency to wander into H at odd hours, and sit on the edge of a table, leaving Jane Brown divided between proper respect for an *interne* and fury over the wrinkling of her table covers. It was during one of these visits that she spoke of Doctor Willie.

"Because he is a country practitioner," she said, "you —you patronize him."

"Not at all," said the Senior Surgical Interne. "Personally I like him immensely."

"Personally!"

The Senior Surgical Interne waved a hand toward Johnny's bed.

"Look there," he said. "You don't think that chap's getting any better, do you?"

"If," said Jane Brown, with suspicious quiet, "if you think you know more than a man who has practised for forty years, and saved more people than you ever saw, why don't you tell him so?"

There is really no defence for this conversation. Discourse between a probationer and an *interne* is supposed to be limited to yea, yea, and nay, nay. But the circumstances were unusual.

"Tell him!" exclaimed the Senior Surgical Interne, "and be called before the Executive Committee and fired! Dear girl, I am inexpressibly flattered, but the voice of an *interne* in a hospital is the voice of one crying in the wilderness."

Twenty-two, who was out on crutches that day for the first time, and was looking very big and extremely awkward, Twenty-two looked back from the elevator shaft and scowled. He seemed always to see a flash of white duck near the door of H ward.

To add to his chagrin, the Senior Surgical Interne clapped him on the back in congratulation a moment later, and nearly upset him. He had intended to go back to the ward and discuss a plan he had, but he was very morose those days and really not a companionable person. He stumped back to his room and resolutely went to bed.

There he lay for a long time looking at the ceiling, and saying, out of his misery, things not necessary to repeat.

So Twenty-two went to bed and sulked, refusing supper, and having the word "Vicious" marked on his record by the nurse, who hoped he would see it some time. And Jane Brown went and sat beside a strangely silent Johnny, and worried. And the Senior Surgical Interne went down to the pharmacy and thereby altered a number of things.

The pharmacy clerk had been shaving—his own bedroom was dark—and he saw the Senior Surgical Interne in the little mirror hung on the window frame.

"Hello," he said, over the soap. "Shut the door."

The Senior Surgical Interne shut the door, and then sniffed. "Smells like a bar-room," he commented.

The pharmacy clerk shaved the left angle of his jaw, and then turned around.

"Little experiment of mine," he explained. "Simple syrup, grain alcohol, a dash of cochineal for coloring, and some flavoring extract. It's an imitation cordial. Try it."

The Senior Surgical Interne was not a drinker, but he was willing to try anything once. So he secured a two-ounce medicine glass, and filled it.

"Looks nice," he commented, and tasted it. "It's not bad."

"Not bad!" said the pharmacy clerk. "You'd pay four dollars a bottle for that stuff in a hotel. Actual cost here, about forty cents."

The Senior Surgical Interne sat down and stretched out his legs. He had the glass in his hand.

"It's rather sweet," he said. "But it looks pretty." He took another sip.

After he had finished it, he got to thinking things over. He felt about seven feet tall and very important, and not at all like a voice crying in the wilderness. He had a strong inclination to go into the Superintendent's office and tell him where he went wrong in running the institution—which he restrained. And another to go up to H and tell Jane Brown the truth about Johnny Fraser—which he yielded to.

On the way up he gave the elevator man a cigar.

He was very explicit with Jane Brown.

"Your man's wrong, that's all there is about it," he said. "I can't say anything and you can't. But he's wrong. That's an operative case. The Staff knows it."

"Then, why doesn't the Staff do it?"

The Senior Surgical Interne was still feeling very tall. He looked down at her from a great distance.

"Because, dear child," he said, "it's your man's case.

You ought to know enough about professional ethics for that."

He went away, then, and had a violent headache, which he blamed on confinement and lack of exercise. But he had sowed something in the Probationer's mind.

For she knew, suddenly, that he had been right. The Staff had meant that, then, when they looked at Johnny and shook their heads. The Staff knew, the hospital knew. Every one knew but Doctor Willie. But Doctor Willie had the case. Back in her little town Johnny's mother was looking to Doctor Willie, believing in him, hoping through him.

That night Twenty-two slept, and Jane Brown lay awake. And down in H ward Johnny Fraser had a bad spell at that hour toward dawn when the vitality is low, and men die. He did not die, however. But the night nurse recorded, "Pulse very thin and iregular," at four o'clock.

She, too, was not a famous speller.

During the next morning, while the ward rolled bandages, having carefully scrubbed its hands first, Jane Brown wrote records—she did it rather well now—and then arranged the pins in the ward pincushion. She made concentric circles of safety-pins outside and common pins inside, with a large H in the centre. But her mind was not on this artistic bit of creation. It was on Johnny Fraser.

She made up her mind to speak to Doctor Willie.

Twenty-two had got over his sulking or his jealousy, or whatever it was, and during the early hours, those hours when Johnny was hardly breathing, he had planned something. He thought that he did it to interest the patients and make them contented, but somewhere in the

back of his mind he knew it was to see more of Jane Brown. He planned a concert in the chapel.

So that morning he took Elizabeth, the plaster cast, back to H ward, where Jane Brown was fixing the pincushion, and had a good minute of feasting his eyes on her while she was sucking a jabbed finger. She knew she should have dipped the finger in a solution, but habit is strong in most of us.

Twenty-two had a wild desire to offer to kiss the finger and make it well. This, however, was not habit. It was insanity. He recognized this himself, and felt more than a trifle worried about it, because he had been in love quite a number of times before, but he had never had this sort of feeling.

He put the concert up to her with a certain amount of anxiety. If she could sing, or play, or recite—although he hoped she would not recite—all would be well. But if she refused to take any part, he did not intend to have a concert. That was flat.

"I can play," she said, making a neat period after the H on the pincushion.

He was awfully relieved.

"Good," he said. "You know, I like the way you say that. It's so—well, it's so competent." He got out a notebook and wrote "Miss Brown, piano selections."

It was while he was writing that Jane Brown had a sort of mental picture—the shabby piano at home, kicked below by many childish feet, but mellow and sweet, like an old violin, and herself sitting practising, over and over, that part of Paderewski's Minuet where, as every one knows, the fingering is rather difficult, and outside the open window, leaning on his broom, worthless Johnny Fraser, staring in with friendly eyes and an extremely dirty face. To Twenty-two's unbounded amazement she

flung down the cushion and made for the little ward linen room.

He found her there a moment later, her arms outstretched on the table and her face buried in them. Some one had been boiling a rubber tube and had let the pan go dry. Ever afterward Twenty-two was to associate the smell of burning rubber with Jane Brown, and with his first real knowledge that he was in love with her.

He stumped in after her and closed the door, and might have ruined everything then and there by taking her in his arms, crutch and all. But the smell of burning rubber is a singularly permeating one, and he was kept from one indiscretion by being discovered in another.

It was somewhat later that Jane Brown was reprimanded for being found in the linen room with a private patient. She made no excuse, but something a little defiant began to grow in her eyes. It was not that she loved her work less. She was learning, day by day, the endless sacrifices of this profession she had chosen, its unselfishness, its grinding hard work, the payment that may lie in a smile of gratitude, the agony of pain that cannot be relieved. She went through her days with hands held out for service, and at night, in the chapel, she whispered soundless little prayers to be accepted, and to be always gentle and kind. She did not want to become a machine. She knew, although she had no words for it, the difference between duty and service.

But—a little spirit of rebellion was growing in her breast. She did not understand about Johnny Fraser, for one thing. And the matter of the linen room hurt. There seemed to be too many rules.

Then, too, she began to learn that hospitals had limita-

tions. Jane Brown's hospital had no social worker. Much as she loved the work, the part that the hospital could not do began to hurt her. Before the quarantine women with new babies had gone out, without an idea of where to spend the night. Ailing children had gone home to such places as she could see from the dormitory windows, where the work the hospital had begun could not be finished.

From the roof of the building at night she looked out over a city that terrified her. The call of a playing child in the street began to sound to her like the shriek of accident. The very grinding of the trolley cars, the smoke of the mills, began to mean the operating room. She thought a great deal, those days, about the little town she had come from, with its peace and quiet streets. The city seemed cruel. But now and then she learned that if cities are cruel, men are kind.

Thus, on the very day of the concert, the quarantine was broken for a few minutes. It was broken forcibly, and by an officer of the law. A little newsie, standing by a fire at the next corner, for the spring day was cold, had caught fire. The big corner man had seen it all. He stripped off his overcoat, rolled the boy in it, and ran to the hospital. Here he was confronted by a brother officer, who was forbidden to admit him. The corner man did the thing that seemed quickest. He laid the newsie on the ground, knocked out the quarantine officer in two blows, broke the glass of the door with a third, slipped a bolt, and then, his burden in his arms, stalked in.

It did not lessen the majesty of that entrance that he was crying all the time.

The Probationer pondered that story when she heard it. After all, laws were right and good, but there were

higher things than laws. She went and stood by Johnny's bed for a long time, thinking.

In the meantime, unexpected talent for the concert had developed. The piano in the chapel proving out of order, the elevator man proved to have been a piano tuner. He tuned it with a bone forceps. Strange places, hospitals, into which drift men from every walk of life, to find a haven and peace within their quiet walls. Old Tony had sung, in his youth, in the opera at Milan. A pretty young nurse went around the corridors muttering bits of "Orphant Annie" to herself. The Senior Surgical Interne was to sing the "Rosary," and went about practising to himself. He came into H ward and sang it through for Jane Brown, with his heart in his clear young eyes. He sang about the hours he had spent with her being strings of pearls, and all that, but he was really asking her if she would be willing to begin life with him in a little house, where she would have to answer the door-bell and watch telephone calls while he was out.

Jane Brown felt something of this, too. For she said: "You sing it beautifully," although he had flatted at least three times.

He wrote his name on a medicine label and glued it to her hand. It looked alarmingly possessive.

Twenty-two presided at the concert that night. He was extravagantly funny, and the sort of creaking solemnity with which things began turned to uproarious laughter very soon.

Everything went off wonderfully. Tony started his selection too high, and was obliged to stop and begin over again. And the two Silversteins, from the children's ward, who were to dance a Highland fling together, had a violent quarrel at the last moment and had to be scratched. But everything else went well. The ambu-

lance driver gave a bass solo, and kept a bar or two ahead of the accompaniment, dodging chords as he did wagons on the street, and fetching up with a sort of garrison finish much as he brought in the ambulance.

But the real musical event of the evening was Jane Brown's playing. She played Schubert without any notes, because she had been taught to play Schubert that way.

And when they called her back, she played little folk songs of the far places of Europe. Standing around the walls, in wheeled chairs, on crutches, pale with the hospital pallor, these aliens in their eddy listened and thrilled. Some of them wept, but they smiled also.

At the end she played the Minuet, with a sort of flaming look in her eyes that puzzled Twenty-two. He could not know that she was playing it to Johnny Fraser, lying with closed eyes in the ward upstairs. He did not realize that there was a passion of sacrifice throbbing behind the dignity of the music.

Doctor Willie had stayed over for the concert. He sat, beaming benevolently, in the front row, and toward the end he got up and told some stories. After all, it was Doctor Willie who was the real hit of the evening. The convalescents rocked with joy in their roller chairs. Crutches came down in loud applause. When he sat down he slipped a big hand over Jane Brown's and gave hers a hearty squeeze.

"How d'you like me as a parlor entertainer, Nellie?" he whispered.

She put her other hand over his. Somehow she could not speak.

The First Assistant called to the Probationer that night as she went past her door. Lights were out, so the First

Assistant had a candle, and she was rubbing her feet with witch hazel.

"Come in," she called. "I have been looking for you. I have some news for you."

The exaltation of the concert had died away. Jane Brown, in the candle light, looked small and tired and very, very young.

"We have watched you carefully," said the First Assistant, who had her night garments on but had forgotten to take off her cap. "Although you are young, you have shown ability, and—you are to be accepted."

"Thank you, very much," replied Jane Brown, in a strangled tone.

"At first," said the First Assistant, "we were not sure. You were very young, and you had such odd ideas. You know that yourself now."

She leaned down and pressed a sore little toe with her forefinger. Then she sighed. The mention of Jane Brown's youth had hurt her, because she was no longer very young. And there were times when she was tired, when it seemed to her that only youth counted. She felt that way to-night.

When Jane Brown had gone on, she blew out her candle and went to bed, still in her cap.

Hospitals do not really sleep at night. The elevator man dozes in his cage, and the night watchman may nap in the engineer's room in the basement. But the night nurses are always making their sleepless rounds, and in the wards, dark and quiet, restless figures turn and sigh.

Before she went to bed that night, Jane Brown, by devious ways, slipped back to her ward. It looked strange to her, this cavernous place, filled with the unlovely noises of sleeping men. By the one low light near the doorway she went back to Johnny's bed, and sat down beside

him. She felt that this was the place to think things out. In her room other things pressed in on her; the necessity of making good for the sake of those at home, her love of the work, and cowardice. But here she saw things right.

The night nurse found her there some time later, asleep, her hunting-case watch open on Johnny's bed and her fingers still on his quiet wrist. She made no report of it.

Twenty-two had another sleepless night written in on his record that night. He sat up and worried. He worried about the way the Senior Surgical Interne had sung to Jane Brown that night. And he worried about things he had done and shouldn't have, and things he should have done and hadn't. Mostly the first. At five in the morning he wrote a letter to his family telling them where he was, and that he had been vaccinated and that the letter would be fumigated. He also wrote a check for an artificial leg for the boy in the children's ward, and then went to bed and put himself to sleep by reciting the "Rosary" over and over. His last conscious thought was that the hours he had spent with a certain person would not make much of a string of pearls.

The Probationer went to Doctor Willie the next day. Some of the exuberance of the concert still bubbled in him, although he shook his head over Johnny's record.

"A little slow, Nellie," he said. "A little slow."

Jane Brown took a long breath.

"Doctor Willie," she said, "won't you have him operated on?"

He looked up at her over his spectacles.

"Operated on? What for?"

"Well, he's not getting any better," she managed

desperately. "I'm—sometimes I think he'll die while we're waiting for him to get better."

He was surprised, but he was not angry.

"There's no fracture, child," he said gently. "If there is a clot there, nature is probably better at removing it than we are. The trouble with you," he said indulgently, "is that you have come here, where they operate first and regret afterward. Nature is the best surgeon, child."

She cast about her despairingly for some way to tell him the truth. But even when she spoke she knew she was foredoomed to failure.

"But—suppose the Staff thinks that he should be?"

Doctor Willie's kindly mouth set itself into grim lines.

"The Staff!" he said, and looked at her searchingly. Then his jaws set at an obstinate angle.

"Well, Nellie," he said, "I guess one opinion's as good as another in these cases. And I don't suppose they'll do any cutting and hacking without my consent." He looked at Johnny's unconscious figure. "He never amounted to much," he added, "but it's surprising the way money's been coming in to pay his board here. Your mother sent five dollars. A good lot of people are interested in him. I can't see myself going home and telling them he died on the operating table."

He patted her on the arm as he went out.

"Don't get an old head on those young shoulders yet, Nellie," he said as he was going. "Leave the worrying to me. I'm used to it."

She saw then that to him she was still a little girl. She probably would always be just a little girl to him. He did not take her seriously, and no one else would speak to him. She was quite despairing.

The ward loved Doctor Willie since the night before. It watched him out with affectionate eyes. Jane Brown

watched him, too, his fine old head, the sturdy step that had brought healing and peace to a whole county. She had hurt him, she knew that. She ached at the thought of it. And she had done no good.

That afternoon Jane Brown broke another rule. She went to Twenty-two on her off duty, and caused a mild furore there. He had been drawing a sketch of her from memory, an extremely poor sketch, with one eye larger than the other. He hid it immediately, although she could not possibly have recognized it, and talked very fast to cover his excitement.

"Well, well!" he said. "I knew I was going to have some luck to-day. My right hand has been itching—or is that a sign of money?" Then he saw her face, and reduced his speech to normality, if not his heart.

"Come and sit down," he said. "And tell me about it."

But she would not sit down. She went to the window and looked out for a moment. It was from there she said:

"I have been accepted."

"Good." But he did not, apparently, think it such good news. He drew a long breath. "Well, I suppose your friends should be glad for you."

"I didn't come to talk about being accepted," she announced.

"I don't suppose, by any chance, you came to see how I am getting along?" he inquired humbly.

"I can see that."

"You can't see how lonely I am." When she offered nothing to this speech, he enlarged on it. "When it gets unbearable," he said, "I sit in front of the mirror and keep myself company. If that doesn't make your heart ache, nothing will."

"I'm afraid I have a heart-ache, but it is not that." For a terrible moment he thought of that theory of his which referred to a disappointment in love. Was she going to have the unbelievable cruelty to tell him about it?

"I have to talk to somebody," she said simply. "And I came to you, because you've worked on a newspaper, and you have had a lot of experience. It's—a matter of ethics. But really it's a matter of life and death."

He felt most horribly humble before her, and he hated the lie, except that it had brought her to him. There was something so direct and childlike about her. The very way she drew a chair in front of him, and proceeded, talking rather fast, to lay the matter before him, touched him profoundly. He felt, somehow, incredibly old and experienced.

And then, after all that, to fail her!

"You see how it is," she finished. "I can't go to the Staff, and they wouldn't do anything if I did—except possibly put me out. Because a nurse really only follows orders. And—I've got to stay, if I can. And Doctor Willie doesn't believe in an operation and won't see that he's dying. And everybody at home thinks he is right, because—well," she added hastily, "he's been right a good many times."

He listened attentively. His record, you remember, was his own way some ninety-seven per cent of the time, and at first he would not believe that this was going to be the three per cent, or a part of it.

"Well," he said at last, "we'll just make the Staff turn in and do it. That's easy."

"But they won't. They can't."

"We can't let Johnny die, either, can we?"

But when at last she was gone, and the room was in-

credibly empty without her,—when, to confess a fact that he was exceedingly shame-faced about, he had wheeled over to the chair she had sat in and put his cheek against the arm where her hand had rested, when he was somewhat his own man again and had got over the feeling that his arms were empty of something they had never held—then it was that Twenty-two found himself up against the three per cent.

The hospital's attitude was firm. It could not interfere. It was an outside patient and an outside doctor. Its responsibility ended with providing for the care of the patient, under his physician's orders. It was regretful —but, of course, unless the case was turned over to the Staff——.

He went back to the ward to tell her, after it had all been explained to him. But she was not surprised. He saw that, after all, she had really known he was going to fail her.

"It's hopeless," was all she said. "Everybody is right, and everybody is wrong."

It was the next day that, going to the courtyard for a breath of air, she saw a woman outside the iron gate waving to her. It was Johnny's mother, a forlorn old soul in what Jane Brown recognized as an old suit of her mother's.

"Doctor Willie bought my ticket, Miss Nellie," she said nervously. "It seems like I had to come, even if I couldn't get in. I've been waiting around most all afternoon. How is he?"

"He is resting quietly," said Jane Brown, holding herself very tense, because she wanted to scream. "He isn't suffering at all."

"Could you tell me which window he's near, Miss Nellie?"

She pointed out the window, and Johnny Fraser's mother stood, holding to the bars, peering up at it. Her lips moved, and Jane Brown knew that she was praying. At last she turned her eyes away.

"Folks have said a lot about him," she said, "but he was always a good son to me. If only he'd had a chance—I'd be right worried, Miss Nellie, if he didn't have Doctor Willie looking after him."

Jane Brown went into the building. There was just one thing clear in her mind. Johnny Fraser must have his chance, somehow.

In the meantime things were not doing any too well in the hospital. A second case, although mild, had extended the quarantine. Discontent grew, and threatened to develop into mutiny. Six men from one of the wards marched *en masse* to the lower hall, and were preparing to rush the guards when they were discovered. The Senior Surgical Interne took two prisoners himself, and became an emergency case for two stitches and arnica compresses.

Jane Brown helped to fix him up and he took advantage of her holding a dressing basin near his cut lip to kiss her hand, very respectfully. She would have resented it under other circumstances, but the Senior Surgical Interne was, even if temporarily, a patient, and must be humored. She forgot about the kiss immediately, although he did not.

Her three months of probation were drawing to a close now, and her cap was already made and put away in a box, ready for the day she should don it. But she did not look at it very often.

And all the time, fighting his battle with youth and vigor, but with closed eyes, and losing it day by day, was Johnny Fraser.

Then, one night on the roof, Jane Brown had to refuse the Senior Surgical Interne. He took it very hard.

"We'd have been such pals," he said, rather wistfully, after he saw it was no use.

"We can be, anyhow."

"I suppose," he said with some bitterness, "that I'd have stood a better chance if I'd done as you wanted me to about that fellow in your ward, gone to the staff and raised hell."

"I wouldn't have married you," said Jane Brown, "but I'd have thought you were pretty much of a man."

The more he thought about that the less he liked it. It almost kept him awake that night.

It was the next day that Twenty-two had his idea. He ran true to form, and carried it back to Jane Brown for her approval. But she was not enthusiastic.

"It would help to amuse them, of course, but how can you publish a newspaper without any news?" she asked, rather listlessly, for her.

"News! This building is full of news. I have some bits already. Listen!" He took a notebook out of his pocket. "The stork breaks quarantine. New baby in O ward. The chief engineer has developed a boil on his neck. Elevator Man arrested for breaking speed limit. Wanted, four square inches of cuticle for skin grafting in W. How's that? And I'm only beginning."

Jane Brown listened. Somehow, behind Twenty-two's lightness of tone, she felt something more earnest. She did not put it into words, even to herself, but she divined something new, a desire to do his bit, there in the hospital. It was, if she had only known it, a milestone in a hitherto unmarked career. Twenty-two, who had always been a man, was by way of becoming a person.

He explained about publishing it. He used to run a typewriter in college, and the convalescents could mimeograph it and sell it. There was a mimeographing machine in the office.

The Senior Surgical Interne came in just then. Refusing to marry him had had much the effect of smacking a puppy. He came back, a trifle timid, but friendly. So he came in just then, and elected himself to the advertising and circulation department, and gave the Probationer the society end, although it was not his paper or his idea, and sat down at once at the table and started a limerick, commencing:

"We're here in the city, marooned."

However, he never got any further with it, because there are, apparently, no rhymes for "marooned." He refused "tuned" which several people offered him, with extreme scorn.

Up to this point Jane Brown had been rather too worried to think about Twenty-two. She had grown accustomed to seeing him coming slowly back toward her ward, his eyes travelling much faster than he did. Not, of course, that she knew that. And to his being, in a way, underfoot a part of every day, after the Head had made rounds and was safely out of the road for a good two hours.

But two things happened that day to turn her mind in onto her heart. One was when she heard about the artificial leg. The other was when she passed the door of his room, where a large card now announced "Office of the *Quarantine Sentinel.*" She passed the door, and she distinctly heard most un-hospital-like chatter within. Judging from the shadows on the glass door, too, the room was full. It sounded joyous and carefree.

Something in Jane Brown—her mind, probably—turned right around and looked into her heart, and made an odd discovery. This was that Jane Brown's heart had sunk about two inches, and was feeling very queer.

She went straight on, however, and put on a fresh collar in her little bedroom, and listed her washing and changed her shoes, because her feet still ached a lot of the time. But she was a brave person and liked to look things in the face. So before she went back to the ward, she stood in front of her mirror and said:

"You're a nice nurse, Nell Brown. To—to talk about duty and brag about service, and then to act like a fool."

She went back to the ward and sat beside Johnny. But that night she went up on the roof again, and sat on the parapet. She could see, across the courtyard, the dim rectangles of her ward, and around a corner in plain view, "room Twenty-two." Its occupant was sitting at the typewriter, and working hard. Or he seemed to be. It was too far away to be sure. Jane Brown slid down onto the roof, which was not very clean, and putting her elbows on the parapet, watched him for a long time. When he got up, at last, and came to the open window, she hardly breathed. However, he only stood there, looking toward her but not seeing her.

Jane Brown put her head on the parapet that night and cried. She thought she was crying about Johnny Fraser. She might have felt somewhat comforted had she known that Twenty-two, being tired with his day's work, had at last given way to most horrible jealousy of the Senior Surgical Interne, and that his misery was to hers as five is to one.

The first number of the *Quarantine Sentinel* was a great success. It served in the wards much the same purpose as the magazines published in the trenches. It re-

lieved the monotony, brought the different wards together, furnished laughter and gossip. Twenty-two wrote the editorials, published the paper, with the aid of a couple of convalescents, and in his leisure drew cartoons. He drew very well, but all his girls looked like Jane Brown. It caused a ripple of talk.

The children from the children's ward distributed them, and went back from the private rooms bearing tribute of flowers and fruit. Twenty-two himself developed a most reprehensible habit of concealing candy in the *Sentinel* office and smuggling it to his carriers. Altogether a new and neighbourly feeling seemed to follow in the wake of the little paper. People who had sulked in side-by-side rooms began, in the relaxed discipline of convalescence, to pay little calls about. Crotchety dowagers knitted socks for new babies. A wave of friendliness swept over every one, and engulfed particularly Twenty-two.

In the glow of it he changed perceptibly. This was the first popularity he had ever earned, and the first he had ever cared a fi-penny bit about. And, because he valued it, he felt more and more unworthy of it.

But it kept him from seeing Jane Brown. He was too busy for many excursions to the ward, and when he went he was immediately the centre of an animated group. He hardly ever saw her alone, and when he did he began to suspect that she pretended duties that might have waited.

One day he happened to go back while Doctor Willie was there, and after that he understood her problem better.

Through it all Johnny lived. His thin, young body was now hardly an outline under the smooth, white covering of his bed. He swallowed, faintly, such bits of liquid as were placed between his lips, but there were

times when Jane Brown's fingers, more expert now, could find no pulse at all. And still she had found no way to give him his chance.

She made a last appeal to Doctor Willie that day, but he only shook his head gravely.

"Even if there was an operation now, Nellie," said Doctor Willie that day, "he could not stand it."

It was the first time that Twenty-two had known her name was Nellie.

That was the last day of Jane Brown's probation. On the next day she was to don her cap. The *Sentinel* came out with a congratulatory editorial, and at nine o'clock that night the First Assistant brought an announcement, in the Head's own writing, for the paper.

"The Head of the Training School announces with much pleasure the acceptance of Miss N. Jane Brown as a pupil nurse."

Twenty-two sat and stared at it for quite a long time.

That night Jane Brown fought her battle and won. She went to her room immediately after chapel, and took the family pictures off her little stand and got out ink and paper. She put the photographs out of sight, because she knew that they were counting on her, and she could not bear her mother's eyes. And then she counted her money, because she had broken another thermometer, and the ticket home was rather expensive. She had enough, but very little more.

After that she went to work.

It took her rather a long time, because she had a great deal to explain. She had to put her case, in fact. And she was not strong on either ethics or logic. She said so, indeed, at the beginning. She said also that she had talked to a lot of people, but that no one understood how she felt—that there ought to be no professional ethics,

or etiquette, or anything else, where it was life or death. That she felt hospitals were to save lives and not to save feelings. It seemed necessary, after that, to defend Doctor Willie—without naming him, of course. How much good he had done, and how he came to rely on himself and his own opinion because in the country there was no one to consult with.

However, she was not so gentle with the Staff. She said that it was standing by and letting a patient die, because it was too polite to interfere, although they had all agreed among themselves that an operation was necessary. And that if they felt that way, would they refuse to pull a child from in front of a locomotive because it was its mother's business, and she didn't know how to do it?

Then she signed it.

She turned it in at the *Sentinel* office the next morning while the editor was shaving. She had to pass it through a crack in the door. Even that, however, was enough for the editor in question to see that she wore no cap.

"But—see here," he said, in a rather lathery voice, "you're accepted, you know. Where's the—the visible sign?"

Jane Brown was not quite sure she could speak. However, she managed.

"After you read that," she said, "you'll understand."

He read it immediately, of course, growing more and more grave, and the soap drying on his chin. Its sheer courage made him gasp.

"Good girl," he said to himself. "Brave little girl. But it finishes her here, and she knows it."

He was pretty well cut up about it, too, because while he was getting it ready he felt as if he was sharpening a

knife to stab her with. Her own knife, too. But he had to be as brave as she was.

The paper came out at two o'clock. At three the First Assistant, looking extremely white, relieved Jane Brown of the care of H ward and sent her to her room.

Jane Brown eyed her wistfully.

"I'm not to come back, I suppose?"

The First Assistant avoided her eyes.

"I'm afraid not," she said.

Jane Brown went up the ward and looked down at Johnny Fraser. Then she gathered up her bandage scissors and her little dressing forceps and went out.

The First Assistant took a step after her, but stopped. There were tears in her eyes.

Things moved very rapidly in the hospital that day, while the guards sat outside on their campstools and ate apples or read the newspapers, and while Jane Brown sat alone in her room.

First of all the Staff met and summoned Twenty-two. He went down in the elevator—he had lost Elizabeth a few days before, and was using a cane—ready for trouble. He had always met a fight more than half-way. It was the same instinct that had taken him to the fire.

But no one wanted to fight. The Staff was waiting, grave and perplexed, but rather anxious to put its case than otherwise. It felt misunderstood, aggrieved, and horribly afraid it was going to get in the newspapers. But it was not angry. On the contrary, it was trying its extremely intelligent best to see things from a new angle.

The Senior Surgical Interne was waiting outside. He had smoked eighteen cigarettes since he received his

copy of the *Sentinel,* and was as unhappy as an *interne* can be.

"What the devil made you publish it?" he demanded.

Twenty-two smiled.

"Because," he said, "I have always had a sneaking desire to publish an honest paper, one where public questions can be discussed. If this isn't a public question, I don't know one when I see it."

But he was not smiling when he went in.

An hour later Doctor Willie came in. He had brought some flowers for the children's ward, and his arms were bulging. To his surprise, accustomed as he was to the somewhat cavalier treatment of the country practitioner in a big city hospital, he was invited to the Staff room.

To the eternal credit of the Staff Jane Brown's part in that painful half hour was never known. The Staff was careful, too, of Doctor Willie. They knew they were being irregular, and were most wretchedly uncomfortable. Also, there being six of them against one, it looked rather like force, particularly since, after the first two minutes, every one of them liked Doctor Willie.

He took it so awfully well. He sat there, with his elbows on a table beside a withering mass of spring flowers, and faced the white-coated Staff, and said that he hoped that he was man enough to acknowledge a mistake, and six opinions against one left him nothing else to do. The Senior Surgical Interne, who had been hating him for weeks, offered him a cigar.

He had only one request to make. There was a little girl in the training school who believed in him, and he would like to go to the ward and write the order for the operation himself.

Which he did. But Jane Brown was not there.

Late that evening the First Assistant, passing along the corridor in the dormitory, was accosted by a quiet figure in a blue uniform, without a cap.

"How is he?"

The First Assistant was feeling more cheerful than usual. The operating surgeon had congratulated her on the way things had moved that day, and she was feeling, as she often did, that, after all, work was a solace for many troubles.

"Of course, it is very soon, but he stood it well." She looked up at Jane Brown, who was taller than she was, but who always, somehow, looked rather little. There are girls like that. "Look here," she said, "you must not sit in that room and worry. Run up to the operating-room and help to clear away."

She was very wise, the First Assistant. For Jane Brown went, and washed away some of the ache with the stains of Johnny's operation. Here, all about her, were the tangible evidences of her triumph, which was also a defeat. A little glow of service revived in her. If Johnny lived, it was a small price to pay for a life. If he died, she had given him his chance. The operating-room nurses were very kind. They liked her courage, but they were frightened, too. She, like the others, had been right, but also she was wrong.

They paid her tribute of little kindnesses, but they knew she must go.

It was the night nurse who told Twenty-two that Jane Brown was in the operating-room. He was still up and dressed at midnight, but the sheets of to-morrow's editorial lay blank on his table.

The night nurse glanced at her watch to see if it was time for the twelve o'clock medicines.

"There's a rumor going about," she said, "that the

quarantine's to be lifted to-morrow. I'll be rather sorry. It has been a change."

"To-morrow," said Twenty-two, in a startled voice. "I suppose you'll be going out at once?"

There was a wistful note in her voice. She liked him. He had been an oasis of cheer in the dreary rounds of the night. A very little more, and she might have forgotten her rule, which was never to be sentimentally interested in a patient.

"I wonder," said Twenty-two, in a curious tone, "if you will give me my cane?"

He was clad, at that time, in a hideous bathrobe, purchased by the orderly, over his night clothing, and he had the expression of a person who intends to take no chances.

"Thanks," said Twenty-two. "And—will you send the night watchman here?"

The night nurse went out. She had a distinct feeling that something was about to happen. At least she claimed it later. But she found the night watchman making coffee in a back pantry, and gave him her message.

Some time later Jane Brown stood in the doorway of the operating-room and gave it a farewell look. Its white floor and walls were spotless. Shining rows of instruments on clean towels were ready to put away in the cabinets. The sterilizers glowed in warm rectangles of gleaming copper. Over all brooded the peace of order, the quiet of the night.

Outside the operating-room door she drew a long breath, and faced the night watchman. She had left something in twenty-two. Would she go and get it?

"It's very late," said Jane Brown. "And it isn't allowed, I'm sure."

However, what was one more rule to her who had defied them all? A spirit of recklessness seized her. After all, why not? She would never see him again. Like the operating-room, she would stand in the doorway and say a mute little farewell.

Twenty-two's door was wide open, and he was standing in the centre of the room, looking out. He had heard her long before she came in sight, for he, too, had learned the hospital habit of classifying footsteps.

He was horribly excited. He had never been so nervous before. He had made up a small speech, a sort of beginning, but he forgot it the moment he heard her, and she surprised him in the midst of trying, agonizingly, to remember it.

There was a sort of dreadful calm, however, about Jane Brown.

"The watchman says I have left something here."

It was clear to him at once that he meant nothing to her. It was in her voice.

"You did," he said. And tried to smile.

"Then—if I may have it——"

"I wish to heaven you could have it," he said, very rapidly. "I don't want it. It's darned miserable."

"It's—what?"

"It's an ache," he went on, still rather incoherent. "A pain. A misery." Then, seeing her beginning to put on a professional look: "No, not that. It's a feeling. Look here," he said, rather more slowly, "do you mind coming in and closing the door? There's a man across who's always listening."

She went in, but she did not close the door. She went slowly, looking rather pale.

"What I sent for you for is this," said Twenty-two, "are you going away? Because I've got to know."

"I'm being sent away as soon as the quarantine is over. It's—it's perfectly right. I expected it. Things would soon go to pieces if the nurses took to—took to doing what I did."

Suddenly Twenty-two limped across the room and slammed the door shut, a proceeding immediately followed by an irritated ringing of bells at the night nurse's desk. Then he turned, his back against the door.

"Because I'm going when you do," he said, in a terrible voice. "I'm going when you go, and wherever you go. I've stood all the waiting around for a glimpse of you that I'm going to stand." He glared at her. "For weeks," he said, "I've sat here in this room and listened for you, and hated to go to sleep for fear you would pass and I wouldn't be looking through that damned door. And now I've reached the limit."

A sort of band which had seemed to be fastened around Jane Brown's head for days suddenly removed itself to her heart, which became extremely irregular.

"And I want to say this," went on Twenty-two, still in a savage tone. He was horribly frightened, so he blustered. "I don't care whether you want me or not, you've got to have me. I'm so much in love with you that it hurts."

Suddenly Jane Brown's heart settled down into a soft rhythmic beating that was like a song. After all, life was made up of love and work, and love came first.

She faced Twenty-two with brave eyes.

"I love you, too—so much that it hurts."

The gentleman across the hall, sitting up in bed, with an angry thumb on the bell, was electrified to see, on the glass door across, the silhouette of a young lady without a cap go into the arms of a very large, masculine sil-

houette in a dressing-gown. He heard, too, the thump of a falling cane.

Late that night Jane Brown, by devious ways, made her way back to H ward. Johnny was there, a strange Johnny with a bandaged head, but with open eyes.

At dawn, the dawn of the day when Jane Brown was to leave the little world of the hospital for a little world of two, consisting of a man and a woman, the night nurse found her there, asleep, her fingers still on Johnny's thin wrist.

She did not report it.

Mary Roberts Rinehart

BENJAMIN R. SHER

ABE'S CARD

SMOLANSKY was troubled by the fact that he had neither eye, ear, nor nose trouble. In fact, those organs were well and overgenerously developed. Strange as it may seem, such ailment would have been welcomed at this time, for there were only two ways of gaining access to the stairway of the Universal Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Infirmary. The other being an admission card —and Smolansky did *so* want to get it. However his chance of gaining admission was slim—very slim. The sign above the entrance to the hospital prohibiting visitors on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday was inviolate. It would allow of no loophole. There it hung, translated into every conceivable language. However, even at the risk of punning, let me state that Abe Smolansky did not believe in signs. He had oft before met, faced and spurned them.

BEGGARS AND PEDDLERS NOT ALLOWED

He was in that category; a trimmings peddler. Not one with a basket; a telescope case if you please, and his son Julius, who at this moment happened to be at his side, his sample carrier.

"When you see such a sign, Julius," he would say to

his son, "it means less competition. It drives the peddlers away; we're salesmen."

When however in the manufacturing district he was confronted with

NO SALESMEN SEEN AFTER TEN A. M.

he would immediately conjure himself into the rôle of peddler, and through the showroom, past the cutters right to the window of the trimming girl's cage he would go. So you see he really did not believe in the finality of signs.

On this occasion he knew that he must place himself beyond the category of visitor if he was to gain admission to see his wife. He was the picture of health. He couldn't rely on eye, or ear or nose so reverted to his old stand-by—his cunning, ever-active, resourceful brain.

"Julius, that's all there is to it, we got to get it," he remarked with an air of finality to his fifteen-year-old, who merely nodded sheepishly in assent, "and we got to go straight in through that door." He pointed to the spacious doorway through which patients were constantly entering and leaving. "If we could only get past that Irisher the rest would be a cinch. I could find mamma in a minute, all we got to do then is go past the elevator and up the stairs and nobody would bother you, because once you get past that feller"—alluding to the big burly red-faced doorkeeper—"nobody ain't gonno ask you no questions."

"You got right, papa," was Julius' observation.

But Smolansky's experience with Irishmen in the capacity of superintendents, elevator men or doorkeepers was not such as to make him overconfident of success in this particular instance. He stood there watching the

gate tender glance at the tickets of every one entering. Heedless of any explanation and with undisputable command he would dismiss those who attempted to explain the lack of one.

"Julius, that guy ain't got no heart. See him chase that woman away," Abe observed. "You couldn't fool around with him much. Them Irishers don't stand for no monkey business. If they tell you to take a move on you got to better do it quick. You remember that time when we was by Bates & Finneran and I started to go in the showroom and Finneran says to me, 'Hey, you, where you going? Don't you see that sign—no salesmen allowed after ten?' and I said, 'I ain't a salesman, I'm a peddler,' and right away quick he answers to me, 'Peddler, hey? Where's your license?' I started to make a joke, right away he went to call up the police station to tell that I was peddling without a license. They don't understand no jokes."

"Sure, papa, once a boy in school——"

"Now ain't no time to tell stories," interrupted the paternal one, who did not often play the rôle of listener. "Keep still till I think of something."

He had seen enough of that hospital employee to deduct that no amount of cringing, flattering or apologetic bowing would be of any avail. It would have to be a carry-him-off-his-feet, nervy precedure that would succeed—if anything would at all. As he stood across the street watching, suddenly he spied a poorly clad man descending the steps. "Come across quick," he commanded, jerking the boy by the arm. Hurriedly he approached his man when he was out of sight of the hospital doorway.

"Mister, excuse me. What kind of a card you got to have to get in the hospital?" he inquired of the stranger.

"One like this," was the reply as the stranger pulled out a pink card bearing the name and address of the patient and other markings.

"Mister, you look like a kind man. Could you lend me maybe the card for a minute so I could get past that feller by the door? It ain't visiting day and my wife is in the hospital and I wanna see her."

"Sure Mike," replied the sympathizer, glad to frustrate authority.

"I wouldn't be five minutes, mister. Julius, wait with this kind man."

Discarding the rôle of servility, Smolansky drew himself up to his full height of five feet four inches. Brushing away a speck from his greased coat lapel he sauntered up the stairs of the hospital and nonchalantly flashed the card at the doorkeeper, even waiting for the registering turnstile to be turned for him. But the strut of the cock does not befit the guinea hen, and Smolansky's affected pose caused O'Malley, the big gatekeeper, to remark to the special officer stationed alongside of him, "More the matter with that feller's feet than with anything else. See him lift them clodhoppers."

Through the man corridor Smolansky walked and then around to the elevator. The car was about to ascend. The peddler walked with deliberation though still feigning hurriedness to such an extent that the elevator runner gloatingly slammed the door and the car ascended. That part of the program being carried out as planned he hurried up the stairway to the ward and to the bedside of his wife, the orderly taking it for granted that if he passed the watchful gatekeeper his presence was permissible.

When Smolansky's wife showed surprise at his being there on other than a visiting day his only remark was,

"You got to know the ropes, Rosie," for though he may have been lacking in various branches of the English language Smolansky had no small stock of popular slang and breezy phrases.

The scent of the hunt was in his nostrils as he approached his benefactor, once again, on the street. This was too good for Smolansky to relinquish so easily.

"Could you maybe, mister kind man, lend me the card till I send my little Julius up to see his mamma?" he asked pleadingly, half offering the return of the card.

The sympathetic stranger, touched by the peddler's enunciation of the word "mamma," replied, "I'll tell you what you can do. You can keep it if you'll give me a dime. Then I can get a duplicate just as if I lost it."

Readily the coin was brought forth amid a profusion of thanks and humble bows.

"See, Julius, you got to always remember that you got brains and to use them. Now run up to see mamma and come right back quick," and he explained to his son the best course to follow, adding as a parting shot: "Walk straight, Julius, and don't look behind. Keep your head up."

Past O'Malley, Julius Smolansky pranced, in the course of following his father's instructions, only lifting his feet higher than was necessary to register indifference, causing the Irishman again to remark to his fellow employee, "What the divil is this? There's another guy doin' the goose step."

Without event the boy reached his mother, causing her great anxiety as to the special privileges granted her family, ascribing same to her alarming condition.

"It worked, papa," the boy cried elated as he emerged.

"Sure, Julius, always keep your head up and you could pass anybody, Irishers especially."

The next day being Sunday, Smolansky, dressed in his Prince Albert and baggy trousers, made for the hospital and again he threw his head high and strutted by, card in hand. But the tilt, the *exact* tilt, of the head is an art unattainable but by a gifted few. Coquettes, prima donnas, ingenues, movie actors and milliners will tell you that it is the tilt of the head that makes the difference in the price. It is the exact angle or not at all. A little too high or too low, too much to the left or too much to the right and the effect falls flat, falls hopelessly flat, exposing the entire make-up so plainly that it is just as discernible to the gallery as the orchestra. And so with Smolansky. O'Malley noticed something was wrong—too much prance; too much tilt.

"Bill," he queried of the special officer, "did you ever see a guy that had anything the matter with his eye, ear or nose hold his head like that? Something phony about that feller. Maybe tryin' to put something over on a health-insurance company. Guess I'll take a pipe at his card when he comes out and see what's supposed to be the matter with him."

"Hey, you, let's look at your card," O'Malley commanded when the peddler was about to pass him on his way out.

Boldly it was presented. The big Irish attendant looked at the card, then at the bewhiskered Smolansky, then at the card again, looked intently at the card as if his eyes belied him, but there it was plain as day—"Jeremiah P. O'Donohue." Never a twitch, never a betraying movement of suspicion was discernible on O'Malley's face as he asked, "What's the matter with you, Jerry?"

"Ah, look," gurgled the peddler, opening his mouth and pointing down his throat.

"So it is," the gateman commented sympathetically,

returning the card and ending a very suspenseful moment for the deceiver.

"If that feller is an O'Donohue I'll eat the English flag for breakfast every morning," he said. "This is something new on me, Bill. Now, just what that feller is using that name for I don't know, but it ain't going to be long before I find out." After a moment he continued. "Now really, Bill, what would anybody want to be usin' the name of Jerry O'Donohue for? I tell you it's tough when a race gets famous. Since Ireland is free everybody wants to be an Irishman." But patience was a virtue that had been handed down to O'Malley through the ages and he was willing to allow the holder of the O'Donohue card latitude. "He'll come again, Bill, and when he does I'll know what it's all about before he leaves. I promise you that."

That was the last the officer heard of the incident that day though O'Malley waxed warm with curiosity. The next two days being regular visiting days, Smolansky and Julius entered the hospital through the visitors' entrance, eliminating the necessity of passing O'Malley. Up the elevator Smolansky proceeded to visit his rapidly improving wife, who still wondered, as did the other inmates of the ward, how Smolansky had procured the extraordinary privilege of seeing his wife daily.

"Abe, I sure thought I was dying when I seen you last Saturday. How did you get in, my Abie, tell me? And you too, Julius?" she inquired.

However, before the ever-willing loquacity of Julius could assert itself to an intelligible degree, Smolansky had clapped his hands on the boy's mouth. "Mamma, we got brains—that's how," he said, and to appease the boy turned to him, adding: "Ain't we, Julius?"

"Yes, papa."

"That's enough, Julius. You said enough. We'll come to-morrow, mamma," said Smolansky and prepared to depart.

"But to-morrow ain't visiting day, Abe," enlightened his better half.

"For who it ain't visitin' day, mamma?" demanded the peddler in an injured tone, surprised and offended that his wife should still have doubt as to his ability to fulfill his promise. "By us every day is visiting day. Ain't it, Julius?"

"You betcher, papa."

The next day as they approached the hospital the old peddler turned to the boy, and handing him the pink card that had permitted the possibility of their being daily visitors to Mrs. Smolansky remarked: "You go in first this time, Julius."

"Why, papa?"

"I'm a little tired. I'm gonna rest," lied Smolansky, not having told his son of the brief interrogation of the doorkeeper.

"All right, papa," the dutiful one replied.

The boy having departed, Smolansky immediately sought a point of vantage through the store window opposite the main entrance of the hospital. As he drank his two-cent glass of vichy he watched Julius pass the gatekeeper, to all appearances everything satisfactory. All unsuspecting he left the store to wait at the corner for the boy's return. But Smolansky's departure was premature. Had he waited he would have seen the big doorkeeper leave hurriedly; and had he been close enough to hear he would have heard O'Malley say to his comrade, "Bill, watch this gate until I follow this kid. He's got that O'Donohue card. Let's see what he's up to."

But while O'Malley was watching the maneuvers of the boy as he sneaked around the elevator, upstairs to his convalescing mother, Smolansky was musingly extracting a tobacco-cigarette stub from a metal box, murmuring to himself, "If that boy only had mine brains he would be President of the United States."

"Well, what do you know about that, Bill?" blurted the doorkeeper, shoving his hat back on his head and placing his arms akimbo. "Them fellers sure are cagy enough for me. I'll fix 'em. I'll——"

That was as far as he got in his tirade, being interrupted by the strutting Smolansky's entrance into the hospital. "Here he comes now. Must be the boy's father."

Smolansky evidently thought it wise to inject a little more caution into his actions. Instead of carrying the card in his hand promiscuously as he had heretofore, he had it in his pocket and did not exhibit it to view until right in front of the turnstile and then only face down.

"Show your cards while passing," sonorously called O'Malley, trying to affect a sort of indifferent mechanical singsong tone, and as Smolansky passed the sharp blue eyes of the Irishman caught the name of Jerry O'Donohue on the card. "Show your cards while passing," he continued in a droning change of tone. Out of the corner of his eye he watched the wily peddler approach the elevator.

Having apparently satisfied himself that he was unnoticed Smolansky quickly darted up the stairs. He had not ascended very far when he heard a kindly voice calling, "Hey, Mr. O'Donohue, where are you going?"

"Yes, sir, yes, sir, that's me," assured Smolansky not yet aware of who was calling him, nor having recognized the voice by the civil respectful tone assumed by

the gatekeeper. Turning about he met his Nemesis. Undaunted he opened the honey jar corked with diplomatic flattery. "You sure are smart, mister, to remember every patient's name."

"Yes, Mr. O'Donohue, that's part of me job. And where are you going, Mr. O'Donohue?"

For a moment, Smolansky, though not a student of rhetoric, caught the rasping error of the unnecessary repetition of the proper noun and fear began to creep upon him; but when he saw the friendly smile of the hospital employee he was convinced that his mental diagnosis was incorrect.

"Me, I'm going to the clinic up on the third floor," he replied in as matter-of-fact a voice as was possible for him at the moment.

"Don't you know they have an elevator here, Mr. O'Donohue?"

"But I'm in a little bit of a hurry. I figure if I could get up there before that load of people on the elevator I could get waited on first and get away quick to my business."

Still the kindly voice continued. "Well, being a countryman of mine, Mr. O'Donohue, I'll see that you are the first to be called." Together they mounted the stairs, Smolansky's knees weakening with each approach to the waiting room; still however never doubting that his alert brain would get him out of his dilemma.

Reaching the room he dropped into the back seat, seemingly exhausted.

"Ooh, I'm so tired from climbing up the stairs," he puffed.

"But you ain't ever going to be reached, Mr. O'Donohue, away back here. Come, let's go up to the front row. No countryman of mine is going to suffer any

longer than I can help it. We Irishmen have suffered long enough."

Smolansky smelled the proverbial rat but open clash or dispute was the very last thing to which Abe ever resorted. All he ever wanted was time to think. Give him enough time and he could cope with any situation. So with a show of all-too-willing assent he moved to the first row and sat himself down.

"Your card," the orderly requested, holding out his hand and receiving from Smolansky the pink ticket. Carrying the ticket to the clerk at the desk the orderly waited while an index was consulted and the card and other data presently returned to him; all of which he took into an adjoining room.

Having so far progressed O'Malley was satisfied to allow whatever further conversation was to pass to emanate from Smolansky, who by this time was convinced that all was not well. In fact, Smolansky was planning to leave his professed benefactor as quickly and quietly as possible. "Excuse me a minute, mister. I would like to get it a drink of water," he uttered pathetically.

"Sure," responded O'Malley, and as Smolansky was about to rise laid a detaining hand on the peddler's arm, calling to the orderly, "Please bring our friend Mr. O'Donohue a drink. He's a bit faint."

The celerity with which the orderly fulfilled the request convinced Abe that it was time to beat a hasty retreat. Action, drastic action, was now necessary. Putting the cup to his lips he felt the cold refreshing fluid and was filled with new courage. He had it—a bribe. It had never failed him heretofore. He was about to put his hand in his pocket when a door opened and an intern entered clad in white, sleeves rolled up. Austere as a tragedian he called solemnly from a pink card in his

hand the name of Jeremiah P. O'Donohue, then added softly, "Ready now, Mr. O'Donohue. Come right in."

Gone from Smolansky was the thought of the bribe, gone was the composure, gone everything when he looked upon the intent face of the surgeon. "That ain't me," was all he could faintly murmur, "that ain't me."

"Aw, don't lose yer nerve. You're a disgrace to the Irish," O'Malley protested, half lifting out of his seat the now ashen-faced Abe.

"Come, now," the orderly commanded, grabbing Smolansky by the arm.

"There ain't nothing the matter with me. Look, look!" Smolansky shouted at the top of his voice, pointing to his throat and at the same time fighting to free himself from the custodian's grasp.

"That's what they all say when the time comes," cold-bloodedly retorted the attendant as he took a firmer hold on the unfortunate one and pushed the peddler toward the open room from which the surgeon had entered. "You ain't got the nerve of a cat."

"I swear there ain't nothing the matter, I swear——" and further protests were pushed with Smolansky into the soundproof room.

Mrs. Rosie Smolansky, convalescent, sat upon a chair adjoining her bed waiting for her beloved to enter. She had good news. The doctor had informed her that she would be discharged as cured to-morrow. She was thinking with what joyous surprise Abe would receive the news. Her thoughts were disturbed by a muffled shriek emanating from the hall: "There ain't nothing the matter with me, murderers, I tell you there ain't nothing the matter with me."

No amount of sound proofing was able to deaden com-

pletely all the shrieks and groans that were emitted at various times by various patients in the different branches of the infirmary. Some were beyond suppression and this was one that was not to be denied. The voice was all powerful, though a bit thick. It was strangely familiar to Mrs. Smolansky.

"It sounds like my Abe, and it don't sound like him," she said to the nurse who was standing near her.

"There ain't nothing the matter with me," shrieked the voice again.

At the renewed outburst Mrs. Smolansky showed alarm. "Mrs. Glass, please see what it is," she requested of the nurse. She had been an ideal patient. In fact this was the first unusual request that she had made, so the nurse, also mindful of Smolansky's daily visits and ascribing them to a "pull," replied, "Yes, my dear, I will go and see right away."

Returning, the nurse exhibited a card, explaining: "See, dear, Miss Breen sent this out to me. It's the name of the patient who is just coming out of ether—Mr. Jeremiah P. O'Donohue."

"Thank God," muttered Rosie.

"Now be calm, dear. I'll be right back. I am just going to return this card to Miss Breen." She had barely crossed the threshold when a cry pierced the room.

"Come to me quick, mamma! They're killing me."

Out of her chair darted Mrs. Smolansky. "That ain't no O'Donohue. That's my Abie. That's Abie! He's in trouble."

"Mamma!" she heard again, and located the voice. To it through a door marked "Silence" she dashed, reaching her husband's bed only a few steps before O'Malley, who was coming up to silence the disturbing Abie.

He found husband and wife in profound embrace,

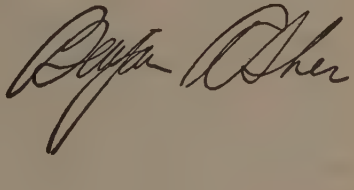
interrupted only by the explanation of the attending nurse: "They took out his tonsils. It's Doctor Riordan's first tonsil operation and it's a success. Your husband sure needed them taken out. I never saw a worse set in the fifteen years I've been here."

"How did he come to do it?" the wife inquired as soon as Smolansky relaxed his arms. Just then a laugh disturbed the conversation and Abe saw O'Malley.

"Him—him—that loafer," he berated, safe in his wife's arms. "Him, he done it. He's to blame. He put it up a job they should take them out. That no-good loafer, that——"

"Shame on you, Abe," interrupted the wife. "He did something I couldn't get you to do. I told you and the doctor told you already since we married that you should have them taken out." Then turning to O'Malley from whose face the smile was rapidly disappearing, she asked sweetly: "Tell me, please, how did you coax him to do it?"

All the big, good-natured Irishman could say was, "The joke is on me." And shaking his head, he left the room muttering, "They sure are God's chosen people, the Lord bless them."



G. B. STERN

"THE ELEVENTH HAT"

I

Teddy Mostyn's behavior was certainly open to suspicion. He distinctly resembled a "gentleman cracksman," slim in evening clothes and silk hat, as he lurked and lingered and peered from the opaque green shadows of the chestnut trees which swept pompously up the drive to the doors of The Sanctuary, Hampstead Heath. Behind those doors, Sir Runnymede Clarke, professor of theological, ethical and spiritual research, was usually to be found—or rather, not to be found—blandly researching, his mind far from all thought of notoriety, his hand modestly waving away the laurel wreath—a favorite affectation of that eminent gentleman.

But on this hot, bright evening at the end of May, the doors were open wide to the visitors who were arriving in cars and on foot. Not a large crowd, but enough to justify the word "party." Sir Runnymede was "showing off." He had gently enveloped the famous medium, "Marcelle," in his hospitality, from the first moment of her first arrival in England, so that when she could be coaxed to function it should be nowhere else but under his benign patronage. "She is so delicately poised, so harmoniously adjusted to her environment," he explained; "the least infinitesimal jar to the psyche—and phut! the sitting is over!"

So that his invitations to assist in the séance were issued with the extremest care. It was unthinkable, of course, that a single member of the Press should receive permission to be present. Quite unthinkable, which was a pity, because "Marcelle" was emphatically of news value.

And so Teddy Mostyn, journalist, hung about in the dense shade of the chestnuts, in obedience to Anthea's instructions: "Wait in the drive till you see a group of four, walking; nearly everyone else will be in cars, of course; but the Burlington-Webbs live so near here. Then stroll in just behind them. Father will take it for granted that you're of their party—especially when he sees how prettily I receive you."

Anthea was Sir Runnymede's daughter; and, though she was only nineteen, she had ruled his home for him since the death of her mother, two years before. Teddy thought her (a) a goddess, (b) a radiant woodland sprite, (c) an angel—d.e.f.g.h., etc., can be imagined.

It was thoroughly perverse of her to help him to a chance of writing up tonight's séance for his sensational rag, "The Daily Snap." But it would mean so much in Teddy's career. "Such a stunt, Anthea, if mine should be the only description published the next morning!" Anthea was a mischievous, human child, and liked Teddy, and secretly thought her father an "old dug-out" for his prejudice.

"She's divine!" flashed Teddy's emotional half; and "What a stunt if I pull it off!" his professional half, like a sky-sign that changes from green to yellow. Were these the four Burlington-Webbs? No, only another car. "Lucky for me it's fine, waiting here. Wonder if old Sir Magna Charta'll spot me. Doesn't know me by sight, so if he thinks I'm a pal of Anthea's—she's the bravest,

sweetest, noblest—what a rotter Philip was, not to let me come in with him!"

"My dear man," his friend, Philip Asterley, had previously replied to the request, in those low, clear, carefully restrained accents, which gave an impression that, after years of tense struggle, the owner had managed at last to curb his wild and impetuous youth to a decent imperturbability, "my dear man, it simply can't be done. You don't quite realize what bad form it would be for me to abuse the mutual trust which is understood between host and guest, by exposing Sir Runnymede to the vulgarity of three columns in 'The Daily Snap.' "

And Teddy had felt duly snubbed.

But Anthea, bless her, had more daring in her little finger (her bewitching little finger!) than Philip in——

Ah! four people walking together up the drive. The Burlington-Webbs at last!

A few moments later, and Teddy, in obedience to directions, had left his hat with the butler in the hall; and was following the Burlington-Webbs through the lounge, and into a room on the left, where Sir Runnymede and Anthea were receiving their guests. He was swayed by an awful giddiness and panic—a wild impulse to fly—but checked it;—a fleeting wish that he were more like Philip in demeanor, and less like Teddy—and then he moved forward to receive Anthea's courteously indifferent greeting; Anthea, a tiny, imperious maid in her pale tints of water-blue and lily-green. Sir Runnymede, he was thankful to see, was engrossed at the buffet with some very special and exalted visitors.

Gradually Teddy recovered from a sweating preoccupation that the whole roomful was about to point at him with loud jeers of recognition: "That's Teddy Mostyn, of 'The Daily Snap'." "Mostyn, of 'The Daily

Snap'? What's he doing here?" "Who invited him?" "Push him out!"—and was able to look about and recognize here and there some prominent person in society, or from the scientific and literary worlds. There was Philip, as usual most disconcertingly at his ease. Teddy, to relieve his feelings, fiercely cut him, and Philip slightly raised his brows—he did not mind Mostyn being present as long as the responsibility were not his, but if Mostyn chose to be puppyish——

And, indeed, the description fitted Teddy, who was given to clumsy, lovable gambollings, to high spirits and swift remorse, and to ingenuous displays of affection.

Philip Asterley, lately his inseparable, was one year younger than Teddy's twenty-four, but frequently wondered when the latter would begin to show signs of growing up. "Do you despise me for my illusions, Philip?" Teddy had once asked anxiously; and his blue eyes widened at the weary reply: "Not half as much as you envy me for my disillusions, my son." You can see by this example of epigram, as Teddy saw at once, that Philip really was simply wonderful at times!

The Burlington-Webbs had been almost the last visitors to arrive; and not long afterwards Sir Runnymede gave the signal for adjournment into an inner room on the further side of the sombre black and bronze curtains which were draped over an aperture opposite the door into the hall. "Marcelle" was waiting for them, seated on a raised platform. She was a peasant girl, and always wore a prim and rather shabby black stuff dress with a high collar—nothing picturesque, nothing exotic. "We look upon this as a scientific experiment, not as a fancy dress ball," Sir Runnymede had courteously explained to a guest who expressed disappointment at the medium's common-place appearance. Beside her, sat a

gentleman who apparently blended the offices of trainer, impresario, and guardian angel. An absence of crystals, bowls of ink, and other old-fashioned apparatus of the mystics, denoted again, with some firmness, that a high class séance was not to be confused with a conjuring entertainment.

The babel of tongues sank to a few expectant whispers. Sir Runnymede had ensured that only two or three sceptics were present, to flavor the atmosphere of credulity. "They say her powers are quite super-normal—gets through to a Chinese child-martyr who died before Confucius"—"Queer blank eyes she has"—"Broadhurst Challoner is here, y'know—the Wimpole Street man—such a triumph if he gets converted"—"I do feel—well, not frightened, but nervy—on the jump—as though *something*—" —"Any test, Sir Runnymede says—afterwards. All he asks for is quiet attention and an open mind"—"Hush! Hush!" Everybody was in their seats by now. Teddy, obedient to a swift signal from Anthea, found himself next to his love, halfway down a row near the back of the room.

On his other side was a stately patrician woman with a disdainful mouth, whom Teddy recognized as Philip's mother: the Beautiful Mrs. Asterley, they called her. He could claim no personal acquaintance; she had but just returned from winter and spring on the Riviera; and he had only begun to play Damon to Philip's Pythias in January. But Philip had shown him photographs, and on this one topic, hardly even troubled to tone down his boyish enthusiasm. "She looks as though she could be uncomfortably noble," reflected Teddy; and then, remembering Anthea, was lost to the rest of the world.

The bronze and black curtains fell back over the doorway. The windows had all been carefully darkened.

Absolute darkness was Marcelle's one requisite. The stillness was oppressive, and the sudden chirp of a bird outside, seemed sacrilege. The Chinese child-martyr of before Confucius took possession of Marcelle's slumbering consciousness, and spoke through her lips—falteringly at first, then more fluently. Fortunately it—he—could speak English.

Anthea's hand flew out sideways, and excitedly grabbed Teddy's. He, like Marcelle, at once became possessed—not with child-martyrs, but with passionate clamorous ecstasy. The overwrought sensibilities of everybody present worked upon his own, infecting him recklessly. Anthea! Anthea! How lovely she was—so magically close to him there in the warm, thick gloom! What else existed? What else mattered?

"I love you, Anthea—love you! Oh! do tell me—yes, now; I can't stand it any longer—you *must* say you love me, or I'll—I'll——Oh! I don't know what I'll do—kill somebody. Anthea!" He poured his soul out in fervent whispers. Anthea, helpless, tried to stop him—he was not to be stopped. She desired to give all her attention to the séance—to that queer, thin little voice trickling out its strange wisdom from the platform; but the intoxicated Teddy would not let her. The more she hushed him, the more persistent he became. Anthea, irritated and then furious at his untimely proposals and absolute loss of tact, at last whispered back, softly but distinctly: "No, I don't love you. I hate you. I'm sick of you. I never want to see you again."

It was the most unlucky measure that she could have taken, if her idea was mainly to silence him. Teddy forgot everything except that he had been refused, his adoration mocked and baffled. His one primitive need was now to rush away. He sprang up and plunged dis-

tractedly for the door. His chair scraped backwards and clattered on to the parquet. He stumbled over innumerable feet. Somebody cried out. Somebody else sharply said "Silence!" Teddy stumbled again, kicking another chair. Ah! here were the curtains of the door at last.

But Sir Runnymede Clarke's séance had been reduced by one young lover's supreme egoism, to pandemonium. The awful, the irremediable catastrophe had happened. "Marcelle," her trance rudely broken, had gone off into hysterics, and was thrilling the air with scream after scream. Everybody was on their feet now—every tongue talking: "Who was it?" "What was it?" "Where is he?" "Why"—And then the masterful voice of their host, calling for the lights to be switched on.

II

—"Mother, your emeralds!"

Philip Asterley's sudden exclamation drew the shocked attention of the little clump of three or four guests within hearing. They crowded round. "Oh! Mrs. Asterley, have you lost them? What was it? A pendant? When did you last notice—" Mrs. Asterley's hand was roaming over her bare neck in that incredulous fashion of believing the missing article must be still there, because one believes it there. "Yes—a pendant —emeralds. Exquisite stones. I—Philip!" She was very pale.

"You had it on just before the séance," Furness Lequesne, A.R.A., asserted positively. "I noticed it when you were holding your liqueur—the crême-de-menthe. Two dabs of bright color—and the dead black lace of your dress—it made a picture."

"Old-fashioned art, but useful evidence," murmured his irreverent sister.

A thorough search over that part of the floor where Mrs. Asterley had been sitting, discovered nothing. By this time, all Sir Runnymede's guests knew that Mrs. Asterley's emerald pendant had been—lost?—within the last twenty minutes. The second sensation of the evening eclipsed the first. It was not long before the two were linked.

"Lost? No. Stolen," declared a plump gentleman, with aggressively angry eyebrows. He was Professor Brax, a lecturer at the Hampstead College of Spiritual and Theological Research. "Stolen!" he repeated. The hitherto unspoken word, uttered so abruptly, ripped aside the silken blandness of uncertainty, and left the company stark and uneasy. "Not much doubt about the thief. We'll find out who it was that ran away so quickly in the middle of the sitting. Meanwhile," fussily, "we must insist, of course—I think I may speak in the name of everybody present?—we must insist—oh, a mere matter of form, Sir Runnymede—on turning out our pockets, and the ladies their bags, before leaving this room. For our own satisfaction, you understand? A mere matter of form." He echoed this phrase so often, and with such sinister emphasis, that some of the more nervous among the innocent visitors began to feel suspected, and wondered uncomfortably whether the investigation might indeed reveal the missing pendant concealed about their persons.

"And now," continued Professor Brax, when the formal search had revealed no traces of the stolen emeralds, "if we can't find the missing jewels, what about the missing guest, hey? One of your visitors, Sir Runnymede, escaped from the room in the middle of the séance. Now—are we all here? That's to say," getting rather muddled, "which of us whom you invited, isn't?"

Sir Runnymede Clarke vainly wished it had been Professor Brax himself. Scientifically, they were rivals. Socially, they were cronies. Intimately, they detested one another.

"I did just notice one or two young men who were strange to me," he replied sulkily.

Brax pounced. "One or two? That won't do, Sir Runnymede. Was it one or was it two? Hey? Or—perhaps I'm being officious. Yes, you think I'm being officious. You'd rather I didn't meddle, and left it to the police?"

"No, no, Brax." Sir Runnymede was overcome with horror at the notion. "It would be all over the papers tomorrow. Do let us, that is to say, if Mrs. Asterley will allow it, try our utmost to discover the thief amongst ourselves, as it were." He realized that this might have been expressed with greater advantage. "I mean—our own common-sense—a little private detective work—and if that fails, naturally, we must call in Scotland Yard. But I certainly am anxious to avoid"—he shuddered—"newspaper reporters in the house." If he had glanced at his daughter Anthea then, he might have been struck by her piteous guilty look. But he had turned enquiringly to Mrs. Asterley, who reassured him with: "Certainly, my dear Sir Runnymede; I quite agree with you that it's pleasanter for all of us if the matter need not develop into a newspaper sensation. It's most kind of Professor Brax to bother——"

Professor Brax, being then given his head, so to speak, enjoyed himself heartily; taking down the name of each guest before permitting them to leave, and calling on Sir Runnymede to identify them, and compare the list with his list of invited guests. It tallied. Ten men and seven ladies. Thus was established the fact that the

person who had so noisily rushed away in the dark, must have been the same as the one or two strange young men recalled by Sir Runnymede—he was still obstinately vague about their number. "I tell you, my dear Brax, I thought that they—he—were friends of Anthea, and concerned myself no further in the matter."

"The confusion and upsetting of chairs was quite close to me," Mrs. Asterley's charming, well-bred voice parted the cross old men in their wrangle, like a rivulet of cool water, "and before that I heard a lot of whispering—quite indistinguishable, though."

"A-h-h!" the Professor pounced delightedly on this fresh evidence. "But you saw nothing of the criminal's eyes, for instance, or his clothes?"

"My dear Professor, I could not have seen my own hand if I had held it up in front of my face. The atmosphere was like the best blue-black ink."

"Marcelle's psychic partner told me that it was essential," Sir Runnymede interposed.

"Well, but who did you see in your neighborhood when you first sat down, Mrs. Asterley? Someone else must have heard the whispering."

"You weren't far off, I think, Dr. Challoner. And Miss Clarke."

"I—did—hear—some whispering," faltered Anthea, speaking the truth, but hardly the whole truth.

Challoner had heard it, too.

"Well—but people don't whisper to themselves," argued Professor Brax, who, like the old lady who lived in a shoe, had so many clues he didn't know what to do.

The butler, when questioned, produced a fresh clue. He had opened the French windows of the refreshment-room, he said, to air it after the visitors had withdrawn into the inner room for the séance. Then he busied him-

self clearing up the buffet. Suddenly someone rushed through from within, and out by the windows into the garden. He might in his frantic haste have mistaken that way out for the ordinary door into the hall, or he might simply have preferred the garden exit. "I really couldn't say, sir. I was standing h'at the buffet at that moment with my back to the room, you understand, sir? Naturally, surprised by the h'incident, I crossed to the windows and beheld the retreating figure of a young gentleman in evening clothes, sir, but bare-'eaded, running down the flagged path. I moved a few paces after him before I realized, sir, that there was no hope of overtaking him." The butler's well-turned phrases were a credit to The Sanctuary.

The company now took their leave in rather an embarrassed fashion, murmuring conventional sympathy or thanks to their host and hostess. All except the Asterleys and Professor Brax. The latter, tremendously excited, invited Sir Runnymede and Mrs. Asterley to accompany him in quest of footprints down the dim garden to where the flagged path bent round to join the drive. Philip was about to accompany them, when Anthea, by a look, detained him, and drew him out into the now deserted hall.

"Philip, do help me—I must tell someone."

"Why, certainly, Anthea. What is it?" It streaked across his mind that she might herself have taken his mother's pendant to pay a gambling debt; but this he dismissed as sensational folly.

"You know—it was Teddy."

"What? Who took the—"

"Of *course* not!" with a little stamp of indignation. "Teddy who made all that noise while Marcelle—You see, he was proposing to me, and I was in such a rage

with him for doing it just then, that I refused him. And he just clutched at his hair and rushed away."

Philip fought with laughter and conquered it.

"And left me in this terrible position," continued the distressful maid. "And then," unreasonably, "your mother goes and gets her emeralds stolen!"

Philip's desire to laugh was over. He suddenly saw Teddy's reputation and liberty seriously menaced by his "absurdly juvenile behavior."

"I'm afraid you'll have to tell them just why he left in such a hurry, won't you, Anthea? It's embarrassing for you, but—"

"I can't—I can't! At least, I can't while there's a hope that I needn't. Because father would never forgive me for smuggling a newspaper reporter into his séance. It's the one thing that would—"

"Get his goat," finished her hearer, lending a savor to inelegance, by his correct and precisely articulated accents.

"But I still think, in fairness to Teddy, that you ought to clear him," he added. "Why, they're all down there looking for his footmarks—as though he were a criminal."

"If I clear him, I'll have to explain him. And father will dislike him just as much as a reporter as a criminal. So what's the good? No, what I thought was this: They," with a nod towards the garden, "are all on the hunt for Teddy. But you and I, knowing that why Teddy rushed out of the room wasn't because of the pendant, are the only two who know that, therefore, somebody else must have taken it. If you could only track down the *real* thief, Philip dear—" she coaxed him. "After all, you have two advantages over old Brax."

"One of them being, as you say, that I needn't waste

time tracking down Mostyn," he mused. And paused.

"Brains," murmured Anthea, supplying the other.

It was not unnatural that, after this display of minx-hood, Philip should accept the responsibility of a private detective. And, moreover, that he should feel a certain boyish thrill and gusto, carefully concealed, at the prospect.

"First of all, Anthea, we must eliminate. The theft must have occurred between the time when Lequesne noticed mother's emeralds all mixed up with the crême-de-menthe, just before we went into the inner room, and the switching on of the lights afterwards. Now, not one of your father's seventeen guests was missing when the lights were turned on. They all let themselves be searched. Nothing was found. What do we deduce from that?" Philip was unaware of his lapse into the professional vernacular. "Why, that another uninvited guest had been present besides Mostyn. And has escaped under cover of Mostyn's hullabaloo."

"Oh!" breathed Anthea, admiringly.

"Do you remember the queer, persistent way in which your father clung to it that he had noticed 'One or two strange young men', and wouldn't limit it to one only—to Teddy, in fact? Did *you* notice any strangers in the male line when receiving the guests?"

"Two or three," promptly.

Philip groaned.

"Oh! please, Phil, I don't mean to be troublesome like father. But I don't even know by sight all his cronies and students and disciples and things, especially the spiritual research ones. By the way," with an inspiration, "it couldn't have been Marcelle herself, or her stage-manager person? I believe Professor Brax quite forgot their pockets."

Philip shook his smooth, fawn-colored head.

"They couldn't have scrambled across the room as far as my mother, and back again, without being heard, even in the dark. No, the thief—the other strange young man who impressed himself so indelibly on your father's attentive subconsciousness, must have escaped, as I said before, under cover of Mostyn's hullabaloo."

"But Johnson was busy at the buffet, and would have seen him," Anthea objected.

"Not while Johnson was standing outside the French windows, with his back to the room, watching Teddy in full flight. Here are our data, then." He had given in to the fact that there was only one set of phrases for detectives, and that these must be employed. "A young man, presumably well-dressed and a gentleman, or you'd have spotted him, passes himself off as a guest, mingles with the small crowd you have invited, seats himself somewhere near my mother, and takes advantage, first of the darkness, then of an unexpected noise and confusion, to slip away with the emerald pendant, through the outer room, into the deserted hall, and out. In his hurry, however"—and though Philip usually kept such commonplace emotions as triumph and drama tightly on the leash, he could not forbear giving them a run now—"for we can assume that the other ten men at your party would have been fairly calm and leisurely over their departure, with Johnson to assist them—in his hurry, our Raffles happened to leave something behind him, and there it is!" Philip flung out his arm and pointed to a peg. "Ten guests—and the eleventh hat!"

"I noticed that topper ages ago," remarked Anthea, not at all impressed by the climax. "It's Teddy's, of course. He must have been wearing one when he arrived; and don't you remember what Johnson said: 'The

retreating figure of a young gentleman in evening clothes, but bare-'eaded'?"

Philip was almost too disappointed to hide his chagrin.

"I'll toddle round to Mostyn now, I think," he said shortly. "He ought to be warned that he's quite likely to find himself in a mess; and he might just be able to throw some fresh light on the affair." He took up his own hat from where it lay on the oak chest behind him.

"If you're going to see Teddy," Anthea was suddenly a glow of shy, warm blushes, "I mean—if you're going to see Teddy——"

"I *am* going to see Teddy."

"You might tell him—from me—that girls, when something has upset them, very often say the exact opposite,—of what they would have said—"

"If something hadn't upset them," finished her messenger gravely. "You may trust me to make that quite clear to him, my dear Anthea; and I might as well return him his lid, while I'm about it." Philip lifted it down from the peg, glanced casually inside it—and remained staring.

"Looking for goldfish, Phil?" enquired Anthea, with dainty impertinence.

"It's a queer thing," slowly, "to find the initials O'D. J. F. on the lining of Teddy Mostyn's hat."

III

"And so don't let it surprise you, my son," Philip added, when he had finished telling Teddy the exact sequence of events leading up to, and down from, the theft of his mother's emerald pendant that evening, "if a couple of policemen should call any time within the next few days. Your improbably idiotic conduct," severely, "in dashing away from the séance in that guilty

fashion, makes it almost too easy for Professor Brax to land you in the dock!"

"I don't care if he lands me in the hanging-shed," replied the dejected Teddy, racked with unrequited love.

"Oh, yes, bye-the-bye—I forgot; Anthea sent you a message."

Teddy showed faint signs of returning life.

"'Girls, when something has upset them'—I quote the little lady verbatim—'very often say the exact opposite of what they would have said—'"

Teddy bounded to his feet—his warm cheeks were aflame—his countenance was radiant—he clutched distractedly at his hair.

"I'll reward you some day, Philip, old man. I must rush off now—I must see her to-night—I must see her father—ask his consent. O Lord! What ought I to say, d'you think?"

"You're just like the sort of young lover Shakespeare used to write about," commented Philip, surveying him in dispassionate criticism. "Do sit down. You can't go to Sir Runnymede to-night. You're too damp and hot and breathless to go anywhere. Besides, he doesn't like journalists."

"She loves me after all," gasped Teddy, who was incapable of hearing any except angel voices in the heavenly choir. "She meant to say 'yes'! if I hadn't upset her—but I'll spend my life putting that right. Where's my hat? I haven't got a hat. I left it in the hall. I can't ask her father's consent without a hat. Oh, you've brought it along—good—excellent." He grabbed it, thrust it on his head. "Why"—taking it off again—"it's too small. It isn't mine at all. Philip, you dunderheaded—no, I forgot, you're a frightfully good fellow."

Philip negotiated the turbulent youth backwards on

to a chair. "Let me remind you," with weary patience, "that, besides the fact that you haven't a hat, you are also under grave suspicion of stealing my mother's emerald pendant, and that you can't clear yourself without betraying Anthea's little treachery to Anthea's father-who-already-doesn't-like-journalists. The moment is, therefore, not propitious for approaching him. Stop spluttering, and try to help me discover who O'D. J. F. is, and in fifteen years' time you may be able to get married."

"Who's O'D. J. F.?" demanded Teddy, more bewildered than ever, his hair in rakish confusion.

"The owner of this hat. At present in possession of yours. When we find him, we find the pendant."

"How d'you know?"

Philip brought him up-to-date in the process of elimination, deduction, and inspiration, along which he had travelled.

"You're really a damned wonder, Philip!"

"Thanks." The tribute was not unpleasant.

"Hats," went on Teddy, vaguely, "I seem to be seeing hats everywhere—hats and hats and HATS—"

"My dear man, pull yourself together. There were precisely twelve in all. Sir Runnymede's ten male visitors had, presumably, one head each. This is the eleventh hat which O'D. J. F. left behind; taking, by mistake, yours, which you had left behind—being in a dazed and half-witted condition when you fled."

Teddy grinned feebly. "O'D. is an unusual initial," he remarked. "I've heard it before. Where was it? O'D. No, I've written it—in my columns—" He wrote personal paragraphs twice a week for "The Daily Snap."

"You're getting warm," the other encouraged him. "O'D. Think of the apostrophe! O'D. Was it recently?"

Teddy began to rummage through a pile of old "Daily Snaps."

"No—several months ago. November or December." . . . . "Ah!" about a quarter of an hour later.

Philip, wildly excited, managed to achieve a yawn.

"Got it?" he queried, lighting a cigarette.

"O'Donnell James Ferrier. O'D. J. F. How's that?"

"Who is he?"

Teddy triumphantly read out the paragraph; "'Mr. O'Donnell James Ferrier, known on Wall Street as O'D., is expected on Thursday by the "Arctic," the Red Star Company's latest leviathan. He proposes to divide much of his time in future between London and Copenhagen. Mr. Ferrier (inset) is one of the youngest powers in American finance. His dramatic negotiation of the Consolidated North American Beef Trust is too recent to have been forgotten. O'D. hopes to hunt with the Quychley this season; and, as he first learnt to ride in Arizona, he ought to be some thruster."

"God! how badly you write!" was Philip's comment on this. He rose languidly and threw away his cigarette with airy grace. "It seems to fit in all right. Rash young speculator, ruined by sudden fall in beef, in desperate need of ready cash, and then the sudden temptation and fall. What did you say was the address?"

"I didn't."

"Find it out for me, then, there's a good fellow. And don't be long, because it's getting late."

"I suppose I'll have to ring up 'Mrs. Chitter-Chat.' She'll know, if anyone does. She does 'A Woman Lunches Out,' in 'The Evening Snap,' and knows everybody's affairs, everybody's income, and everybody's skeleton-in-the-cupboard. Heaven grant she's in." With which Teddy betook himself to the telephone, and, after

some bright badinage with his co-worker, extracted from her three pieces of information; that Lady Lavender Lestrange really *had* broken off her engagement with Gustav Beckenheimer; that O'Donnell James Ferrier lived at the Albany; and that a very luscious scandal was brewing over P. L. Raven's new revue: "Biff." "The engagement and the scandal I got her to throw in as a disguise for the address," boasted Teddy; "and, d'you know, she was in bed, at the other end!"

"When you are as old as I am, my dear Teddy, you will have learnt that beds are as boring as breakfasts—and not half so essential. At present you really are more like a débutante than any débutantes I've ever met."

Philip tilted his hat with meticulous care, and for the second time that evening picked up the hat of the mysterious O'D., who lived in the Albany, manipulated Beef Trusts, and stole emerald pendants.

Philip was rather surprised when his steely request for an interview with Mr. Ferrier on urgent private business met with instant success. He had anticipated more difficulty.

"I called to return your hat, Mr. Ferrier, and it struck me that it might be convenient for you to give me the emerald pendant in exchange. You have it in your pocket, I presume?"

"Why, sure. Here it is." And, not a whit disturbed by Philip's dramatic opening to their conversation, Ferrier, small, wiry, and brown, in well-cut evening clothes, quizzical gray eyes his only noticeable feature, plunged his hand into his pocket and produced a heap of glittering green fire. "Lovely stones!" he murmured, shaking it out and rippling it through his fingers.

Philip could not help a thrill of admiration at the man's

effrontery. Had he been a thief himself, thus would he have liked to face a crisis. He leant back in his chair, and, smiling a little, said:

"Well, Mr. Ferrier, and what do you propose to do about that pretty little toy?"

Ferrier grinned back genially.

"Give it to my fiancée, I reckon."

But this was carrying insolence and bluff too far. Philip's mouth hardened.

"The police of this country, Mr. Ferrier, though hitherto you may not have found them your equals in mental agility, have, nevertheless, certain obvious uses. I'd rather hoped, as a matter of fact, to leave them out of this affair, if you could have been persuaded to return me the pendant quietly, as some slight amends for the theft—"

"Easy! You're going a bit too far, Mr. —— I don't think you told me your name? I certainly had Mrs. Asterley's pendant in my pocket, but I'm not the thief who stole it."

"Then," with languid irony, "would it be bad manners on my part to enquire who was?"

"Mrs. Asterley."

"It's a lie!" Philip's pose was shattered at last.

"Pardon me, I can quite understand that my statement may have sounded ridiculous, but when you have heard my explanation—"

"Your explanation—yes." The boy had regained command of himself again. "Your inspiration, you mean. Well, go on."

The American was a little annoyed. He showed his annoyance by the curt, cold manner of his narrative:

"Mrs. Asterley was a great friend of my mother's. Several years ago—roughly, about fifteen—she stayed

with us in New York. I was a youngster at the time; I remember, though, that I thought her very beautiful, and always very beautifully dressed. But she must have been hard up at the time, though we didn't know it, or why should she have stolen my mother's pendant? She vanished before we discovered the loss; and my mother, who was generosity itself, wouldn't follow her up. The loss of a friend meant more to her than the loss of a jewel, and I believe she was sorry about it till her death, eighteen months ago. I came to England then, and if Miss Eileen Carew hadn't done me the honor to become engaged to me, I'd never have thought again about that pendant. But it happened that emeralds are her birthstone, and she's got a real craze for them. So when I read in 'The Daily Snap' that the Beautiful Mrs. Asterley had just returned from the Riviera, and was to be one of the guests at Sir Runnymede Clarke's séance to-night —last night, I ought to say—it just occurred to me that I might take the chance of talking privately to the lady, and even suggest she should send me back my property. I was too late to get an invitation, so I went uninvited. I turned up as they were all squeezing into the inner room, and spotted that she was actually wearing it. Pretty cool, eh? But still, New York, and fifteen years ago! I got a seat just behind her; and when that young fellow bolted out of the room like a range steer, it seemed to me a good chance to take what belonged to me, and make off as well—without any confidential talk about it, which, anyhow, wasn't much in my line. The outer room and the hall were empty, and I went straight through and out, helped myself to my hat, which, by the way, turned out to be somebody else's, and came back here. Eileen'll like these little green fellers; they're not large, but the color's first-rate. Now are you satis-

fied, Mr. Sherlock Holmes?" and his dryness relaxed to a smile.

"Very ingenious, but, as I said before, purely the inspiration of the moment," laughed Philip, rather hectic now.

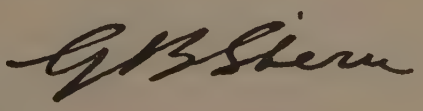
"All right, me lad. Step right over to the 'phone. I guess Mrs. Asterley's number will be in the book. Ring her up, and, apologizing for the lateness of the hour, tell her you've discovered who stole her pendant—that it's one O'Donnell James Ferrier, from New York, and does she wish to prosecute?"

Philip, amused at the man's undaunted optimism, flipped over the pages of the telephone book till he found the name Asterley. For some reason unaccountable to himself, he did not wish Ferrier to guess his identity.

"Hello! . . . Give me Mayfair 40039 . . . No, nine —not five." Silence. Then: "Hullo! . . . Is that Mayfair 40039? . . . Yes, it is! . . . The pendant is found. The thief is one O'Donnell James Ferrier, from New York . . . ."

A long pause . . . . while Philip listened to the voice which answered him. Then he replaced the receiver, and turned to Ferrier.

"I must apologize," he said quietly. "My mother— does not wish to prosecute."



THYRA SAMTER WINSLOW

A LOVE AFFAIR

I

When her mother knocked on her door, at half-past seven, as she always did, Laura Morgan called a drowsy "All right, Ma, I'll get up in a minute." Then she lay in bed for twenty minutes, in a pleasant, half-asleep state and thought of Howard Bates. He seemed very close to her when she was not quite awake as if she were still with him in the dream she had had. The remembrance of the dream, comforting and warm, still surrounded her, though she couldn't remember the details. Not that it mattered. Laura didn't "believe in dreams," though she had once had a paper-covered dream-book, in which she could look up things like daggers and handkerchiefs and learn their significance. Half-asleep was better than dreaming. She could change the dreams to suit herself, could picture Howard more plainly, his soft tumbled hair, his sleepy hazel eyes. She and Howard walking together, dancing together, kissing, even.

There was no reason for getting up promptly, anyhow. Her mother and Maud could get breakfast for her father and Philip, her brother, just as well as if she were down. Lying in bed like this was the pleasantest part of her day.

It didn't seem possible to Laura, now, that less than

a year ago she and Howard had actually gone together. He had come to see her and they had sat in the always-rather-stuffy living room and had sung popular pieces, their heads close together at the piano, or they had gone out. Howard had taken her to Perron's Drug Store for sodas and sometimes to the semi-monthly dances at Stattler's Hall or to Electric Park. He had brought her pound boxes of candy, pink and white bonbons intermingled with assorted chocolates in a blue box tied with pink ribbon. They had been to nearly every episode in "Her Twenty Dangers" which had run, two reels at a time, at the Palace Moving Picture Theatre. Howard had made love to her, had held her close as he told her good night, had kissed her. And now Howard was going with Mary Price.

Laura never knew just how it had started—Howard going with Mary. She and Howard had some sort of an argument about nothing at all. Then Howard hadn't asked her to go to a dance at Stattler's Hall. Not wanting to stay at home, she had gone with a travelling salesman from St. Louis, a fat fellow she didn't like.

She had watched for Howard all evening. He had come in, alone, about ten, and had danced only once with her, spending most of his time smoking cigarettes on the fire-escape with some of the other boys or dancing with other girls. Mary Price hadn't been there at all. Mary Price wasn't even popular with the boys—hadn't been until Howard started going with her.

Somehow, then, Howard had lost interest in Laura. All of her little tricks hadn't helped. Mary's little tricks had. He started going with Mary, instead. Laura knew Mary but not awfully well. Mary had only been living in Morristown for a couple of years. She was a silly, giggly, clinging little thing.

Laura hated Mary. She knew Mary hated her, too. Hated and felt superior because she was "cutting her out." They pretended a great friendliness, with the overcordiality of girls who are a little afraid or jealous. But, lately, there had been a peculiarly unpleasant smile on Mary's round face, a mixture of triumph and indifference, when they met. For, now, Howard took Mary to all of the places he had taken Laura a year before. It was just as natural in the set of which Laura was a part to say "Mary and Howard" as it had been to say "Laura and Howard" last year.

Of course Laura pretended not to care for Howard nor to care whom he went with. She felt she succeeded for no one ever teased her about him. Laura went with other men now, travelling salesmen, Morristown boys, too. She went with Joe Austin most of all because he spent money on her and took her places. But they all seemed alike, stupidly uninteresting, with little, annoying mannerisms. Even the nicest of them was nice only because of faint echoings of Howard's manner. Mostly, they were just a little better than no one at all. They showed that she could get men to be nice to her.

Not that Howard was at all remarkable. Laura knew he wasn't, knew that other girls in Morristown, outside of Mary Price, didn't seem to think much of him But to Laura he seemed very precious. He had rather a deep, slow voice, a way of drawling the last words in sentences, a way of caressing words, even, of putting meanings into them that weren't there at all. Little things he had said were always coming back to Laura with a new poignancy, now that she didn't go with him any more.

Why had she let him go? How had she lost him? She hadn't appreciated him. It seemed impossible now —he was so very dear—and yet, a year ago he had been

nice to her, telephoned her, come to see her, liked her a lot, really, didn't go with other girls at all.

There was no one else for her. The travelling men and the Morristown boys were distressingly alike. Joe Austin was her favorite only because other girls thought he was a good catch. Laura knew that she would probably never get away from Morristown. She had no special ambition or ability. The family had just enough money to get along, without the girls doing anything useful. No one would ever come to Morristown who counted. She was twenty-four and not awfully young looking, a thinnish girl with light hair who was already getting lines around her mouth and chin.

There were several boys who liked Laura, Fred Ellison and Morgan French and Joe. Joe was in love with her, actually. It always surprised Laura when she thought of it. For she never did anything to appeal to Joe. Of course when he took her places, dances or movies, she was nice to him, a sort of reward for his company. Lately, too, she even went through the pretence of coquetting with him if Mary or Howard were present, just to show them that she was having a good time. She had invented a sort of mask of gaiety for them, a rather tremulous, shrill gaiety. She wanted them to see that she was always having a good time, that she was popular, the centre of things. It was hard, keeping up, when Howard wasn't there. Why did she like Howard? It seemed so silly. Howard! His mouth was rather soft and full and he had a way of raising one eyebrow with a doubting half-smile . . . his hands were the sort you want to reach out and touch, if they were near. Howard . . .

Her mother called to her, annoyed, from down stairs.

"Breakfast is all ready, now, Laura. You're a great help to me."

"Coming right away, Ma."

Laura yawned and stretched and got up, putting her bare feet into the pink hand-crochetted bedroom slippers that Julia Austin, Joe's sister, had given her at Christmas, shapeless things, never very pretty, like Julia and all the Austins. In the bathroom she bathed her face and arms and put on a blue cotton crêpe kimono, embroidered in white butterflies, over her pink cotton gown. She inserted a couple of hairpins in her hair and went down stairs to breakfast and her family.

Her mother and Maud, who was two years younger, but more pleasantly plump, were clad in starchy blue morning dresses, with checked aprons over them. They looked agreeably capable as they placed the stewed fruit and oat-meal on the table. Her father and her brother, Philip, were already seated at the breakfast table.

Laura sat down, smiled a mechanical "good morning" and took her napkin from the plated-silver napkin ring with her initials on it. The Morgans had clean napkins twice a week.

"Isn't she the merry little sunshine!" Philip ventured.

"Let me alone," said Laura, and her voice trembled. "If you'd been awake half the night with a headache you'd be grumpy, too."

Philip subsided.

Her father looked at her over his glasses.

"Been having a lot of headaches lately, it seems to me," he said. "Running around too much to dances. If you get to bed some night before twelve, you might wake up in a better humor."

Laura didn't answer. She wanted to scream out, to tell them that her head didn't ache at all but that they annoyed her and bored her terribly, that she didn't want

to talk to them, that all she wanted was Howard Bates, wanted him there, with her now, always.

She finished her breakfast. The two men left. Maud and her mother, in a pleasant buzz of conversation, cleared off the table, began pottering around the dining-room, putting it in order.

"I'll dust the living-room," Laura volunteered. She had to do something, she knew. She could be alone, there.

It couldn't be true—and yet last night at a dance at Miller's Hall there were rumors that Mary and Howard were engaged.

Engaged! If Mary once got him—If the engagement were announced—she had lost him, then. She had lost him anyhow. Of course. Lost him. It didn't seem possible. Howard!

In the living-room she threw herself down on the couch, buried her head in a cushion. There, on that couch, Howard had first kissed her. She stretched out her hand along the back of it. How many times she had found his hand there. And Howard was going to marry Mary Price. She wanted to scream out, to stop things, some way. She didn't know what to do.

She got up and dusted the living-room. On the upright piano was a pile of popular songs with garish covers, torn. Some of those songs Howard had sung to her—had brought to her. Howard didn't have a very good voice, just deep and pleasant. She had liked hearing him sing because it was him singing. His hair, soft and always mussed looking . . . his hands . . . And now he was going to marry Mary. She had tried hard enough . . . everything she knew.

She didn't believe much in prayers—nor in God—since she was grown up. She had often shocked her

family and her friends by declaring her unbelief in any god at all. Yet, now, suddenly, she threw herself on her knees, in front of the couch, and buried her head in the seat cushion.

"Oh, God," she groaned, "send Howard back to me. Make him love me! I—I haven't asked for much. I haven't got much. He is all I want. I don't care . . . I want him—please, God."

She got to her feet feeling a little better. Maybe it was just a rumor, after all. How would Nettie Sayer know? It was Nettie who had told her. Why, even now, Howard might be thinking of her, deciding that he loved her and not Mary, after all. How could he love Mary, after all the good times they had had together, little things, jokes, his kisses?

Laura finished dusting the living-room with a little flourish, even. Why, anything might happen.

Her mother and Maud were in the kitchen. She joined them there, listening for half an hour to their conversation, joining in, finally. Wasn't Maud silly? If only there were some one she could talk to about things. But Maud—her mother—they didn't know, couldn't feel things the way she did. Howard!

He might be going to ring her up. Why, yes, maybe he would telephone her. For an instant she forgot that she had thought that same thing for a long time, months, now. This was different. She had heard of the engagement. She had prayed. Things couldn't go on. Howard worked in his father's store. It was a musty store that dealt mostly in leather and saddles but included some hardware. Laura didn't like it. It was a hard store to find excuses for going into. But he could telephone her from there, any time. Why, she used to telephone him there, lots of times. He got down town about

nine. It was ten, now. He'd been there an hour, more than likely.

"I think I'll go up and dress," she said. "I promised Myrtle Turner I'd attend to those programs for the Ladies' Aid Benefit and get a proof for the meeting tomorrow."

Her mother and Maud nodded mechanically. What difference did anything make to them?

II

Laura bathed and dressed rather rapidly, in a sort of a fever, listening all the while for the telephone to ring. It did not ring. After she had dressed and put on her neat blue coat and tan velvet hat, she made a pretence of talking with Maud. If Howard did telephone, she didn't want to miss him. Then she had a feeling, suddenly, of wanting to be out of the house.

She hurried down town, the business street that stretched out from the Brick Church to the railroad depot. Just off this street she stopped into a grimy little print shop and received smudged copies of the Ladies' Aid Benefit program. That was all her errand consisted of. She had nothing else to do down town.

She must see Howard, of course. She invented half a dozen errands that took her past Bates' Harness and Leather Store, with its hideous imitation horse of dappled gray in one window. She did not see Howard, though she peered in, eagerly, as she passed. She must see him! Once she fancied she did see him. What a dark store it was.

She had bought everything she could think of, down town. She had talked to half a dozen people, making the conversation last as long as possible, giggling whenever she could giggle. She had accepted an invitation to

go to the movies later in the week with Mark Henry, had promised to dance with Archie Miller at the next dance, at Stattler's Hall. She couldn't go home without seeing Howard.

She walked past the store again. Her steps dragged. She looked inside. She did not see him. She must go in—find a pretext for going in. What could she get? She had thought of everything so many times. She must go in.

Her hand was on the door. She was inside the store.

Ray Davenport, the clerk, a sprightly young fellow, came up to her. Had she wasted this chance, coming in —and not seeing Howard?

She knew Ray and smiled at him. She couldn't ask for Howard, now.

"Have you any—any of those new ice-scrapers?" she asked. "Not the kind you chop ice with but the kind that scrapes it, you know, with lots of teeth, into a sort of little cup."

"I don't think so," Ray hesitated. "You don't mean this kind?"

He walked back of the counter, took something from a dusty bin and held it out to her.

"Oh, no, we've got one like that—"

In the back of the store was an office, with partitions just high enough so you could see who was there. Inside, now, was Howard!

She hesitated. Then,

"Hello, Howard," Laura called, prettily.

Howard Bates looked up, came out of the office toward her. As he came she grew almost dizzy, held tightly to her black leather purse. How lovely he looked—he was dearer than she had thought him. He looked tired, a trifle thin, even, and pale. His hair was disheveled.

Howard—why—he had gone with her—had been hers—hers to love, once . . .

She smiled nervously as he came up to her, and held out her hand. She wanted to keep his hand in her own, to run her hand over his face, to put her fingers through his hair, on his lips, as she once had done. She felt that she could have stopped loving him, quite without trouble, if his mouth had been different. Or his hair—or his eyes.

"I'm hunting for an ice-shaver," she told him. "I've been making a sort of a new drink we're all awfully fond of—folks say it's good, but they are probably just being polite about it—and the ice has got to be shaved. The other night one of the boys nearly broke his finger with our ice pick—Jerome Farmer—it's taken it nearly a week to heal. So I thought if I could get another kind—"

Jerome Farmer was the banker's son—awfully popular. He had called, had hurt his finger on an ice pick. She'd let Howard see that she didn't sit at home and wait for him, anyhow.

He was sorry. He didn't have the ice-shaver she wanted. How was every little thing? Going to the dance, Wednesday? He'd see her, then. Before, maybe . . .

What could she say? She had said everything she knew how to say, weeks before.

She was out on the street. Howard hadn't said anything she hoped he would.

She walked home slowly. She was angry, now, at herself. Why had she gone in the store at all? Wouldn't he know that she was running after him? He hadn't mentioned Mary, either. Maybe they weren't engaged, after all. Hadn't she prayed to God?

At home, she took off her serge dress and got into her kimono again. Her mother and sister were not at home. Curled up in the biggest living-room chair she read all of the stories in her favorite magazine. She stopped in between stories to think about Howard. Sometimes she read a whole page before she realized that she didn't know a word she had read. Why had she gone to see him? Still, she wouldn't have got to see him at all if she hadn't gone. What did he see in Mary? A little thing like that! Why couldn't she get him back again? She was as pretty as Mary, as clever, as nice in every way. Maybe—still—hadn't she prayed for him?

She read, listening for the telephone.

At five o'clock the telephone rang. A masculine voice asked for her. She trembled, though she knew it was not Howard. It was Joe Austin. She had an engagement with him for that evening. He telephoned to ask if she would prefer going to a vaudeville show to staying at home.

"Let's stay at home for a change," she said, and wondered why she said it. Usually, she wanted to be going places every minute. "I've been out late every night for a week. I've got to get some sleep. I'll be awfully glad to see you, though, Joe. Around eight."

Half an hour later her mother came home and then Maud. There were meat cakes for dinner and she did not like them. She had not had any lunch. She went without lunch frequently.

Dinner was the usual meal. The family laughing over the day's events. She laughed, too, even permitted Philip to tease her when she said that Joe Austin was coming to call.

"Why doesn't he take the spare room?" Philip tried. "He's here enough. Though he isn't here much for din-

ner. You got to hand it to Joe. He takes you places. He isn't one of these home comforts and mealers like Howard Bates used to be, coming in just before we sat down at the table."

"Is that so?" asked Laura.

Yet she was not angry. She was really happy when, under any circumstances, Howard's name was brought into the conversation.

After dinner she dressed again putting on a cheap pink frock that had done duty as a dance dress before it lost its freshness. She did her hair over, puffing it out around her ears. Her face was getting thin. She must stop worrying about things. Why, she really looked more than her age. Little fat things like Mary Price always looked younger than they really were—fooled men. She added an extra bit of rouge and powder. What did it matter? She wouldn't see Howard.

At eight, Joe Austin came. Maud was spending the evening with some girl friends. The rest of the family always stayed in the dining-room when the girls had company so, as usual, Laura had the living-room for her young man and herself. He came laden with a large box of candy, the chocolate creams already hardened by age. Laura greeted it with extravagant praise and made a pretence of feeding him the first piece.

What a tiresome fellow Joe was! She looked at him critically. Stupid. He had light hair that was rather uneven, the sort that can't be brushed quite smooth, but it lacked the softness of Howard's. Already it was starting to recede. Worse than that, there was a thin place on the back of his head. Yet Joe wasn't more than twenty-six or so, about Howard's age. He was much richer than Howard. His father owned the Austin House, the second best hotel in town, the one frequented

by commercial travellers and theatrical companies, people like that.

Joe was a sort of manager and clerk, and no doubt would take over the hotel when his father died. He was more citified than Howard. He went up to Chicago two or three times a year. He wore better fitting clothes, with little fancy touches to them in lapels and pockets. Howard wore awfully plain things, always in need of pressing, always smelling slightly of tobacco—lovely things—

Joe was rather dapper, even. "Good company," most people called him; he knew a lot of vaudeville jokes, and, in a crowd, could always say something to get applause. Howard wasn't much fun in a crowd. Howard!

Joe was telling a long anecdote, now. As Laura looked at him, she wondered why she allowed him to call, why he liked her, anyhow. His nose was a trifle too short, turned up just a little. His face was a little too thin. There were slight lines in his cheeks. Howard was thin too,—a different thinness. Joe was so stupid and talky and useless. Why, if he died that minute it wouldn't matter. He had no force, no personality. Yet he was more popular, more of a catch than Howard. She knew that. Perhaps that, really, was the reason she kept on going with him. What a bore he was! Should she keep on letting him call, talking to him?

The telephone rang. Almost rudely Laura rushed from the room to answer it. The telephone stood on a little table in the hall. She had hoped . . . The voice was Rosalie Breen's.

"Have you heard the news?" she wanted to know. After the usual hesitation she went on, "I thought maybe you had. You are one of the people she was going to call up. Mary Price and Howard Bates. What do you

think of that? She just 'phoned me. I guess she'll 'phone you right away, too. She's having us all in tomorrow night, a little party. I heard it last night at the dance. Did you? Howard was one of your old flames, once, wasn't he, Laura?"

"Oh, I didn't mind him hanging around before I—I—had some one else," Laura managed to say. She managed a giggle, too.

III

So, Howard was engaged. Well, that was settled. Gone! She might as well wipe him off her slate. She knew Howard. She could never get him back, now. She could never mean anything at all to him. Ever. Something went out. Life was grayer, would always be grayer. Things didn't seem to matter as much. Maybe things had never mattered, anyhow. Of course she'd get over it. People got over things like that in years. Years. To keep on living. . . . And she had prayed to God. God!

She told Joe. They talked about that, other things. Howard gone! Joe was talking. She giggled over his stories. She found she couldn't giggle any more. She lapsed into silence. What did Joe matter? What if she never saw him again? What did anything matter? Joe—well, he was the nicest man she knew—now. A better catch than Howard. Mary knew that. Why of course. Mary would have been glad to have gone with Joe. Why, Mary had made up to Joe. He thought her a stupid little thing. She was, too. Joe! After all, why not? It was better than no one at all, than letting people ask her about Howard.

She went over and sat next to Joe on the couch. She rested her hand, carelessly, near his hand. She leaned

toward him just a little. She was glad her dress was rather low. She looked rather nice, that way.

"I feel so nervous, Joe," she said, "I don't know why. A sort of a mood. Why, I believe I'm trembling. Feel my hand."

She held out one hand to him.

"Not an excuse for me to play hands with you, Laura?"

"You old silly. Don't you know me better than that?"

"Bet I do. What's the matter?"

"I don't know. I just felt sort of—sad. Don't you get that way, sometimes?"

"Not when a girl as nice as you lets me hold her hand. I say, Laura . . ."

"Now, Joe," giggled Laura, and pulled her hand away. Holding Joe's hand gave her as much emotion as holding Maud's hand—or the cat's paw.

"I don't know what's the matter with me," she said, and sighed.

"Now, now," said Joe, and gave her shoulder little pats. "Cheer up and tell papa what's wrong."

She laughed at that and put one hand over his hand as it lay on her shoulder.

"You're a dear little girl," Joe said, "if I only thought you really liked me, Laura . . ."

Half an hour later he had his arms around her, was telling her he loved her, had asked her to marry him.

Engaged to Joe! The years stretched out indefinitely, without color. Why not? She couldn't be unengaged —unmarried—all her life. She couldn't let Mary laugh at her—or Howard. Now, Howard couldn't laugh. Why, Howard had been jealous of Joe Austin, one time. She'd show them—show Howard and Mary. She didn't need Howard. Howard's father was stingy. Mary wouldn't have nearly as much as she could have. She

could have a new house—or stay at the hotel and have no work at all, if she liked . . . clothes, city things, trips . . . she'd have a big wedding, too, bigger than the Prices could afford.

The telephone rang again.

"Answer it, won't you, Joe?" she begged, prettily.

Joe answered it, came back in half a minute.

"It's for you—Mary Price to break the big news," he said.

"Want to go to her house, tomorrow night?"

"Sure thing."

"Shall I tell her—about us?"

"Go ahead, spring it; she's not the only one with news. Good stuff. Give 'em something else to think about."

She was at the telephone.

Mary was pleasantly polite.

"I'm having a few friends in tomorrow night . . . Howard and I—"

"Just heard it, dear," said Laura. "I'm awfully glad. And just for that—here's something for you—you're the first I've told. Joe and I have decided the same thing. Must be in the air. Thanks. Yes . . . isn't it? Won't it be fun . . . lots of parties and things together. I'm so excited. Aren't you? You've got my very, very best wishes. Congratulate Howard for me, won't you? I certainly know how lucky you are, too. Howard is a fine fellow—one of the nicest boys I know. You know, I used to go with Howard a little . . . before—I—I knew Joe. Yes—isn't he fine? Thanks . . . we'll both be delighted. See you tomorrow evening . . ."

Howard! With a smile on her lips, Laura went back into the living-room to her fiancé.

Thyra Samter Winslow.

ISRAEL ZANGWILL

NOAH'S ARK [1]

I

On a summer's day toward the close of the first quarter of the nineteenth century after Christ, Peloni walked in "the good place" of the Frankfort *Judengasse* and pondered. At times he came to a standstill and appeared to study the inscriptions on the tumbled tombstones, or the carven dragons, shields, and stars, but his black eyes burnt inward and he saw less the tragedy of Jewish death than the tragedy of Jewish life.

For "the good place" was the place of death.

Here alone in Frankfort—in this shut-in bit of the shut-in Jew-street—was true peace for Israel. The rest of the Jew-street offered comparative tranquility even for the living; yet when, ninety years before Peloni was born, the great fire had raged therein, the inhabitants had locked the Ghetto-gate against the Christians, less fearful of the raving flames than of their fellow-citizens. Even to-day, if he ventured outside the *Judengasse,* Peloni must tread delicately. The foot-path was not for him; he must plod on the dusty road, with all the other beasts. In some places the very road was too holy for him, and any passer-by might snatch off his hat in punishment for his breaking bounds. The ragged

[1] From *Ghetto Tragedies,* copyright, 1899, by Israel Zangwill, and published by The Macmillan Company.

street urchin or the staggering drunkard might cry to him "*'Jud,' mach mores:* Jew, mind your manners."

Some ten years ago the Frankfort Ghetto had been verbally abolished by a civilized archduke, caught up in the wave of Napoleonic toleration. Peloni had shared in the exultation of the Jews at the final dissipation of the long night of mediævalism. He had written a Hebrew poem on it, brilliantly rhymed, congested with apt quotations from Bible and Talmud, the whole making an acrostic upon the name of the enlightened Karl Theodor von Dalberg. Henceforth Israel would take his place among the peoples, honor on his brow, love in his heart, manhood in his limbs. A gracious letter of acknowledgment from the archduke was displayed in the window of Peloni's little bookselling establishment, amid the door-amulets, phylacteries, praying-shawls, Purim-scrolls, and Hebrew volumes.

But now the prince had been ousted, Napoleon was dead, everywhere the Ghetto-gates were locked again, and the Poem lay stacked on the remainder shelves. In vain had the grateful Jews hastened to fight for the Fatherland, tendered it body and soul. Poor little curly-haired Peloni had been attacked in the streets as an alien that very morning. Roysterers had raised the old cry of "Hep! Hep!"—fatal, immemorial cry, ghastly heritage of the Crusades. Century after century that cry had gone echoing through Europe. Century after century the Jews thought they had lived it down, bought it down, died it down. But no! it rose again, buoyant, menacing, irresponsible. Ah, what a fool he had been to hope! There was no hope.

Rarely, indeed, since the Dark Ages had persecution flaunted itself so openly. Riots and massacres were breaking out all over Germany, and in his own Ghetto

Peloni had seen sights that had turned his patriotism to gall, and crushed his trust in the Christian, his beautiful bubble-dreams of the Millennium. Rothschild himself, whose house in the *Judengasse* with the sign of the red shield had been the centre of the attack, was well-nigh unable to maintain his position in the town. And these local successes inflamed the Jew-haters everywhere. "Let the children of Israel be sold to the English," recommended a popular pamphlet of the period, "who could employ them in their Indian plantations instead of the blacks. The best plan would be to purge the land entirely of this vermin, either by exterminating them, or as Pharaoh, and the people of Meiningen, Würzburg, and Frankfort did, by driving them from the country."

"Oh, God!" thought Peloni, as his mind ran over the long chain from Pharaoh to Frankfort. "Ever more to wander, stoned and derided! Thou hast set a mark on his forehead, but his punishment is greater than he can bear."

The dead lay all around him, one upon another, new red stones shouldering aside the gray stones that told to boot of the death of the centuries. And the pressure of all this struggle for death-room had raised the earth higher than the adjacent paths. He thought of how these dead had always come here; even in their lifetime, when the enemy raged outside. Here they had put the women and children and gone back to the synagogue to pray. Ah, the cowards! always oscillating betwixt cemetery and synagogue, why did they not live, why did they not fight? Yes, but they had fought,—fought for Germany, and this was Germany's reply.

But could they not fight for themselves then, with money, with the sinews of war, if not with the weapons;

with gold, if not with steel? could they not join financial forces all through the world? But no! There was no such solidarity as the Christians dreamed. And they were too mixed up with the European world to dream of self-concentration. Even while the Frankfort Rothschild's house was surrounded by rioters, the Paris Rothschild was giving a ball to the *élite* of diplomatic society.

No! the old Jews were right—there was only the synagogue and the cemetery.

But was there even the synagogue? That, too, was dead. The living faith, the vivid realization of Israel's hope, which had made the Dark Ages endurable and even luminous, were only to be found now among fanatics whose blind ignorance and fierce clinging to the dead letter and the obsolete form counterbalanced the poetry and sublimity of their persistence. In the Middle Ages, Peloni felt, his poems would have been absorbed into the liturgy. For when the liturgy and the religion were alive, they took in and gave out—like all living things. But no—the synagogue of to-day was dead.

Remained only the cemetery.

"Jude, verrek!" Jew, die like a beast.

Yes, what else was there to do? For he was not even a Rothschild, he told himself, with whimsical anguish; only a poor poet, unread, unknown, unhealthy; a shadow that only found substance to suffer; a set of heart-strings across which every wind that blew made a poignant, passionate music; a lamentation incarnate, a voice of weeping in the wilderness, a bubble blown of tears, a dream, a mist, a nobody,—in short, Peloni!

The dead generations drew him. He fell, weeping passionately, upon a tomb.

II

There seemed an unwonted stir in the *Judengasse* when Peloni returned to it. Was there another riot threatening? he thought, as he passed along the narrow street of three-storied frame houses, most of them gabled, and all marked by peculiar signs and figures—the Bear or the Lion or the Garlic or the Red Shield (*Rothschild*)!

Outside the synagogue loitered a crowd, and as he drew near he perceived that there was a long Proclamation in a couple of folio sheets nailed on the door. It was doubtless this which was being discussed by the little groups he had already noted. About the synagogue door the throng was so thick that he could not get near enough to read it himself. But fortunately some one was engaged in reading it aloud for the benefit of those on the outskirts.

"'Wherefore I, Mordecai Manuel Noah, Citizen of the United States of America, late Consul of said States to the City and Kingdom of Tunis, High Sheriff of New York, Counsellor-at-law, and by the Grace of God Governor and Judge of Israel, have issued this my proclamation.'"

A derisive laugh from a dwarfish figure in the crowd interrupted the reading. "Father Noah come to life again!" It was the *Possemacher,* or wedding-jester, who was not sparing of his wit, even when not professionally engaged.

"A foreigner—an American!" sneered a more serious voice. "Who made him ruler in Israel?"

"That's what the wicked Israelite asked Moses!" cried Peloni, curiously excited.

"*Nun, nun!* Go on!" cried others.

"'Announcing to the Jews throughout the world, that

an asylum is prepared and hereby offered to them, where they can enjoy that Peace, Comfort, and Happiness which have been denied them through the intolerance and misgovernment of former ages. An asylum in a free and powerful country, where ample protection is secured to their persons, their property, and religious rights; an asylum in a country remarkable for its vast resources, the richness of its soil, and the salubrity of its climate; where industry is encouraged, education promoted, and good faith rewarded. "A land of Milk and Honey," where Israel may repose in Peace, under his "Vine and Fig tree," and where our People may so familiarize themselves with the science of government and the lights of learning and civilization, as may qualify them for that great and final Restoration to their ancient heritage, which the times so powerfully indicate.' "

The crowd had grown attentive. Peloni's face was pale as death. What was this great thing, fallen so unexpectedly from the impassive heaven his hopelessness had challenged?

But the *Possemacher* captured the moment. "Father Noah's drunk again!"

A great laugh shook the crowd. But Peloni dug his nails into his palms. "Read on! Read on!" he cried hoarsely.

" 'The Place of Refuge is in the State of New York, the largest in the American Union, and the spot to which I invite my beloved People from the whole world is called Grand Island.' "

Peloni drew a deep breath. His face had now changed to the other extreme and was flushed with excitement.

"Noah's Ark!" shot the *Possemacher* dryly, and had his audience swaying hysterically.

"For God's sake, brethren!" cried Peloni. "This is

no joke. Have you forgotten already that here we are only animals?"

"And they went in two by two," said the *Possemacher,* "the clean beasts, and the unclean beasts!"

"Hush, hush, let us hear!" from some of the crowd.

" 'Here I am resolved to lay the foundation of a State, named Ararat.' "

"Ah! what did I say?" the exultant *Possemacher* shrieked at Peloni.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the crowd. "Noah's Ark resting on Ararat!" The dullest saw that.

Peloni was taken aback for a moment.

"But why should not the place of Israel's Ark of Refuge be named Ararat?" he asked of his neighbors.

"If only his name wasn't Noah!" they answered.

"That makes it even more appropriate," he murmured.

But "Noah's Ark" was the nickname that kills. Though the reader continued, it was only to an audience exhilarated by a sense of Arabian Nights fantasy. But the elaborate description of the grandeurs of this Grand Island, and the eloquent passages about the Century of Right, and the ancient Oracles, restored Peloni's enthusiasm to fever heat.

"It is too long," said the reader, wearying at last.

Peloni rushed forward and took up the task. The first sentence exalted him still further.

" 'In God's name I revive, renew, and reëstablish the government of the Jewish Nation, under the auspices and protection of the Constitution and the Laws of the United States, confirming and perpetuating all our Rights and Privileges, our Name, our Rank, and our Power among the nations of the Earth, as they existed and were recognized under the government of the Judges of Israel.' " Peloni's voice shook with fervor. As he

began the next sentence, " 'It is my will,' " he stretched out his hand with an involuntary regal gesture. The spirit of Noah was entering into him, and he felt almost as if it was he who was re-creating the Jewish nation—" 'It is my will that a Census of the Jews throughout the world be taken, that those who are well treated and wish to remain in their respective countries shall aid those who wish to go; that those who are in military service shall until further orders remain true and loyal to their rulers.

" 'I command' "—Peloni read the words with expansive magnificence, his poet's soul vibrating to that other royal dreamer's across the great Atlantic—" 'that a strict Neutrality be maintained in the pending war betwixt Greece and Turkey.

" 'I abolish forever' "—Peloni's hand swept the air,—" 'Polygamy among the Jews.' "

"But where have we polygamy?" interrupted the *Possemacher*.

" 'As it is still practised in Africa and Asia,' " read on Peloni severely.

"I'm off at once for Africa and Asia!" cried the marriage-jester, pretending to run. "Good business for me there."

"You'll find better business in America," said Peloni scathingly. "For do not all our Austrian young men fly thither to marry, seeing that at home only the eldest son may found a family? A pretty fatherland indeed to be a citizen of—a step-fatherland. Listen, on the contrary, to the noble tolerance of the Jew. 'Christians are freely invited.' "

"Ah! Do you know who'll go?" broke in a narrow-faced zealot. "The missionaries."

Peloni continued hastily: " 'Ararat is open, too, to the

Caraites and the Samaritans. The Black Jews of India and Africa shall be welcome; our brethren in Cochin-China and the sect on the coast of Malabar; all are welcome.' "

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed a burly Jew. "So we're to live with the blacks. Enough of this joke!"

But Peloni went on solemnly: " 'A Capitation-tax on every Jew of Three Silver Shekels per annum—' "

"Ah, now we have got to it!" and a great roar broke from the crowd. "Not a bad *Geschäft,* eh," and they winked. "He is no fool, this Noah."

Peloni's blood boiled. "Do you believe everybody is like yourselves?" he cried. "Listen!"

" 'I do appoint the first day of next Adar for a Thanksgiving Day to the God of Israel, for His divine protection and the fulfilment of His promises to the House of Israel. I recommend Peace and Union among ourselves, Charity and Good-will to all, Toleration and Liberality toward our Brethren of all Religions—' "

"Didn't I say a missionary in disguise," murmured the zealot.

Peloni ended, with tremulous emotion: " 'I humbly entreat to be remembered in your prayers, and earnestly do I enjoin you to "keep the charge of the Holy God," to walk in His ways, to keep His Statutes and His commandments and His judgments and Testimonies, as written in the Laws of Moses; "that thou mayest prosper in all thou doest and withersoever thou turnest thyself."

" 'Given under our hand and seal in the State of New York, on the 2d of Ab 5586 in the Fiftieth Year of American Independence.' "

* * * * * *

Peloni's efforts to organize a company of pilgrims to the New Jerusalem brought him only heartache. The very rabbi who had good-naturedly consented to circulate the fantastic foreigner's invitation, tapped his forehead significantly: "A visionary! of good intentions, doubtless, but still—a visionary. Besides, according to our dogmas, God alone knows the epoch of the Israelitish restoration; He alone will make it known to the whole universe, by signs entirely unequivocal; and every attempt on our part to reassemble with any political, national design, is forbidden as an act of high treason against the Divine Majesty. Mr. Noah has doubtless forgotten that the Israelites, faithful to the principles of their belief, are too much attached to the countries where they dwell, and devoted to the governments under which they enjoy liberty and protection, not to treat as a mere jest the chimerical consulate of a pseudo-restorer."

"Noah's a madman, and you're an infant," Peloni's friends told him.

"Since the destruction of the Temple," he quoted in retort, "the gift of prophecy has been confined to children and fools."

"You are giving up a decent livelihood," they warned him. "You are throwing it into the Atlantic."

" 'Cast thy bread upon the waters and it shall return to thee after many days.' "

"But in the meantime?"

" 'Man doth not live by bread alone.' "

"As you please. But don't ask *us* to throw up our comfortable home here."

"Comfortable home!" and Peloni grew almost apoplectic as he reminded them of their miseries.

"Persecution?" They shrugged their shoulders. "It

comes only now and again, like a snow-storm, and we crawl through it."

"That's just it—the lack of manliness—the poisoned atmosphere!"

"Bah! The *Goyim* refuse us equal rights because they know we're their superiors. Let us not jump from the frying-pan into the fire."

So Peloni sailed for New York alone.

III

He was rather disappointed to find no other pilgrim even on the ship. True, there was one Jew, but the business Paradise of New York was his goal across this waste of waters, and of Noah's Ark he had never heard. Peloni's panegyric of Grand Island was rendered ineffective by his own nebulous conception of its commercial possibilities. He passed the slow days in the sailing-vessel polishing up his English, the literature of which he had long studied.

In New York Peloni's hopes revived. Major Noah—for it appeared he was an officer of militia likewise—was in everybody's mouth. Editor of the *National Advocate,* the leading organ of the Bucktails, or Tammany party, a journalist whose clever sallies and humorous paragraphs were widely enjoyed, an author of excellent "Travels," a playwright of the first distinction, whose patriotic dramas were always given on the Fourth of July, a critic regarded as Sir Oracle, a politician, lawyer, and man of the world, a wit, the gay centre of every gathering—surely in this lion of New York, who was also the Lion of David, Israel had at last found a deliverer. They called him madman down in Frankfort, did they? Well, let them come here and see.

He wrote home to the scoffers of the *Judengasse*

all the information about the great man that was in the very air of the American city, though the man himself he had only as yet corresponded with. He told the famous story of how when Noah was canvassing for the office of High Sheriff of New York, it was urged that no Jew should be put into an office where he might have to hang a Christian, to which Noah had retorted wittily, "Pretty Christian, to have to be hanged!" "And you all fancied 'Father Noah' would fall to pieces before the *Possemacher's* wit!" Peloni commented with vengeful satisfaction. "I rejoice to say that Noah will never have anything to do with a *Possemacher,* for he is President of the Old Bachelors' Club, the members of which are pledged never to marry." He told of Noah's adventurous career: of how when he was a mere boy clerk in the auditor's office of his native Philadelphia, Congress had voted him a hundred dollars for his precocious preparation of the actuary tables for the eight-per-cent loan; of the three duels at Charleston, in which he had vindicated at once the courage of the Jew and the policy of American resistance to Great Britain; of his consulate in Tunis, his capture at sea by the British fleet during the war, his release on parole that enabled him to travel about England; of his genius for letters—a very David in Israel; of his generosity to hundreds of strugglers; of his quixotic disdain for money; of his impoverishing himself by paying two hundred thousand dollars of other people's debts as the price of his impulsive shrieval action in throwing open the doors of the Debtors' Jail when the yellow fever broke out within. "Yes," wrote Peloni exultantly, "in New York they talk no more of Shylock. And with all the temptations to Christian fellowship or Pagan free-living, a pillar of the synagogue,—nay, Israel's one hope in all the world!"

It was a wonderful moment when Peloni, at last invited to call on the Judge of Israel, palpitated on the threshold of his study and gazed blinkingly at the great man enthroned before his writing-table amid elegant vistas of books and paintings. What a noble poetic vision it seemed to him: the broad brow, with the tumbled hair; the long, delicate-featured face tapering to a narrow chin environed with whiskers, but clean of beard or even of moustache, so that the mobile, sensitive mouth was laid bare. Peloni's glance also took in a handsome black coat, with a decoration on the lapel, a high-peaked collar, a black puffy bow, a frilled shirt, and a very broad jewelled cuff over a white, long-fingered hand, that held a tall quill with a great breadth of feather.

"Ah, come in," said the Governor of Israel, waving his quill. "You are Peloni of Frankfort."

"Come three thousand miles to kiss the hem of your garment."

Noah permitted the attention. "I am obliged to you for your Hebrew poem in honor of my project," he said urbanely. "I approve of Hebrew—it is a link that binds us to our forefathers. I am myself editing a translation of the Book of Jasher."

"You will have found my verses a very poor expression of your divine ideas."

"You use a difficult Hebrew. But the general drift seemed to show you had caught the greatness of my conception."

"Ah, yes! I have lived in a *Judengasse,* oppressed and derided."

"But there is worse than oppression—there is inward stagnation of the spiritual life. My idea came to me in Tunis, where the Jews are little oppressed. You know President Madison appointed me consul of the United

States for the city and kingdom of Tunis, one of the most respectable and interesting stations in the regencies of Barbary. I had long desired to visit the country of Dido and Hannibal, to trace the field of Zama, and seek out the ruins of Utica,—whose sites I believe I have now successfully established,—but it was my main design to investigate the condition of the Barbary Jews, of whom, you will remember, we have no account later than Benjamin of Tudela's in the thirteenth century. But do not stand—take a chair. Well, I found our brethren—to the number of seven hundred thousand—controlling everything in Barbary, farming the revenue, regulating the coinage, keeping the Dey's jewels and almost his person, —in short, anything but persecuted, though, of course, the majority were miserably poor. They did not know I was a Jew—though Secretary Monroe recalled me because I was, and it was Monroe's doctrine that Judaism would be an obstacle to the discharge of my functions. Absurd! The Catholic priest was allowed to sprinkle the Consulate with holy water: the barefooted Franciscan received an alms, nor did I fail to acknowledge by a donation the decorated branch sent on Palm Sunday by the Greek Bishop. And as for the slaves, I assure you they were not backward in coming to ask favors. The only people who never came to me were precisely the Jews. I went about among them incognito, so to speak, like Haroun Alraschild among his subjects; hence I was able to see all the evils that will never be eliminated till Israel is again a nation."

"Ah! your words are the words of wisdom. You touch the root of the evil. It is what I have always told them."

Noah rose to his feet, displaying a royal stature in harmony with his broad shoulders. "Yes, I resolved it

should be mine to elevate my people, to make them hold up their heads worthily in this century of freedom and enlightenment."

"It is the Ark of the Covenant, as well as of the Deluge, which will rest on Ararat!"

"True—and like the first Noah, I may become the progenitor of a new world. I have communications from the four corners of the earth. You are the type of thousands who will flee from the rotting tyrannies of Europe into the great free republic which I shall direct."

He began to pace the room. Peloni had visions of great black lines of pilgrims converging from every quarter of the compass.

"But this Grand Island—is it yours?" he inquired timidly.

"I have bought thousands of acres of it—I and a few others who believe in the great future of our people."

"Jews?"

"No, not Jews—capitalists who know that we shall become the commercial centre of the new world—that is, the world of the future."

Peloni groaned. "And Jews will not believe? We must go to the Gentiles. Jews will only put their money into Gentile schemes; will build always for others, never for themselves. It is the same everywhere. Alas for Israel!"

"It is what I preach. Why administer Barbary for a savage Dey when you can administer Grand Island for yourself? Seven hundred thousand Jews in savage Barbary, and throughout these vast free States not seven thousand. Ah, but they will come; they will come. Ararat will gather its millions."

"But will there be room?"

"The State of New York," replied Noah, impressively, "is the largest in the Union, containing forty-three thousand two hundred and fourteen square miles divided into fifty-five counties and having six thousand and eighty-seven post-towns and cities together with six million acres of cultivated land. The constitution is founded on equality of rights. We recognize no religious differences. In our seven thousand free schools and gymnasia, four hundred thousand children of every religion are being educated. Here in this great and progressive State the long wandering of my beloved people shall end."

"But Grand Island itself?" murmured Peloni feebly.

"Come here," and Noah unrolled a great map. "See, how nobly it is situated in the Niagara River, near the world-famed Falls, which will supply water-power for our machinery. It is twelve miles long and from three to seven broad, and contains seventeen thousand acres. Lake Erie is two hundred and seventy miles long and borders New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, as well as Canada. And see! by navigable streams this great lake is connected with all that wonderful chain of lakes. By short canals we shall connect with the Illinois and Mississippi, and trade with New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico. Through the Ontario—see here!—we traffic with Quebec, Montreal, and touch the great Atlantic. The Niagara Falls, as I said, turn our machinery. The fur trade, the lumber trade, all is ours. Our cattle multiply, our lands wave with harvests. We are the centre of the world, the capital of the future. And look! See what the *Albany Gazette* says: 'Here the Hebrews can have their Jerusalem without fearing the legions of Titus. Here they can erect their Temple without dreading the

torches of frenzied soldiers. Here they can lay their heads on their pillows at night without fear of mobs, of bigotry and persecution.' "

Peloni drew a long breath, enraptured by this holy El Dorado, sparkling on the map, amid its tributary lakes and rivers.

"You will see the eighteenth chapter of Isaiah fulfilled," Noah went on. "For what is the 'land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia,' which shall send messengers to a nation scattered and peeled? What but America, shadowing us with the wings of its eagle? As it is written elsewhere, 'I will bear thee on eagle's wings.' It is true the English Bible translates 'Woe to the land,' but this is a mistranslation. It should be 'Hail to the land!' Also the word '*goumey*' they translate 'bulrushes'—'that sendeth messengers in vessels of bulrushes!' But does not '*goumey*' also mean 'rush, impetus?' And is it not therefore a prophecy of those new steam-vessels that are beginning to creep up, one of which has just crossed from England to India? Erelong they will be running between America and all the world. It is the Lord making ready for the easy ingathering of His people. Ay, and along these lakes"—the Prophet's finger swept the map—"will be heard the panting of mighty steam-monsters, all making for Ararat. By the way, Ararat lies here," and he indicated a spot of the island opposite Tonawanda on the mainland.

Peloni bent down and poetically pressed his lips to the spot, like Jehuda Halevi kissing the holy soil.

"There is no one in possession there?" he inquired anxiously.

"Maybe a few Iroquois Indians," said Noah. "But they will not have to be turned out like the Hittites and Amorites and Jebusites by our ancestors."

"No?" murmured Peloni.

"Of course not. They are our own brothers, carried away by the King of Assyria. There can be not the slightest doubt that the Red Indians are the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel."

"What?" cried Peloni, vastly excited.

"I shall publish a book on the subject. Yes, in worship, dialect, language, sacrifices, marriages, divorces, burials, fastings, purifications, punishments, cities of refuge, divisions of tribes, High-Priests, wars, triumphs —'tis our very tradition."

"Then I suppose one could lodge with them. I am anxious to settle in Ararat at once."

"You can scarcely settle there till the forest is cleared," said the great man, arching his eyebrows.

"The forest!" repeated Peloni, taken aback.

"Ah, you are dismayed. You are a European, accustomed to ready-made cities. We Americans, we change continents while you wait, build up Aladdin's palaces over-night. As soon as I can manage to go over the ground I will plan out the city."

"You haven't been there yet?" gasped Peloni.

"Ah, my dear Peloni. When should I find time to travel all the way to Buffalo,—a busy editor, lawyer, playwright, what not? True, the time that other men give to domestic happiness the President of the Old Bachelors' Club is able to give to his fellow-men. But the slow canal voyage——"

At this moment there was a knock at the door, and a servant inquired if Major Noah could see his tailor.

"Ah, a good augury!" cried the major. "Here is the tailor come to try on my Robe of Governor and Judge of Israel."

The man bore an elaborate robe of crimson silk

trimmed with ermine, which he arranged about Noah's portly person, making marks with pins and chalk where it could be made to fit better.

"Do you like it?" said Noah, puffing himself out regally.

Peloni's uneasiness vanished. Doubt was impossible before these magnificent realities. Ah! the Americans were wonderful.

"I had to go through our annals," Noah explained, "to find which period of our government we could revive. Kingship was opposed to the sentiment of these States: in the epoch of the Judges I found my ideal. Indeed, what is the President of the United States but a *Shophet*, a Judge of Israel? Ah, you are looking at that painting of me—I shall have to be done again in my new robes. That elegant creature who hangs beside me is Miss Leesugg, the Hebe of English actresses, as she appeared in my 'She would be a soldier, or the Plains of Chippewa.' There is a caricature of my uncle, Aaron J. Phillips, as the Turkish Commander in my 'Grecian Captive.' Dear me, shall I ever forget how he tumbled off that elephant! Ha! ha! ha! That is Miss Johnson, in my 'Yusef Carmatti, or the Siege of Tripoli.' The black and white is a fancy sketch of 'Marion, or the Hero of Lake George,' a play I wrote for the reopening of the Park Theatre and to celebrate the evacuation of New York by the British in 1783."

"Ah, I was there, Major," said the tailor. "It was bully. But the house was so full of generals and colonels you could hardly hear a word."

"Fortunately for me," laughed Noah. "Yes, I asked them to come in full uniform for the *éclat* of the occasion. Which reminds me—here is a ticket for you."

"For the play?" murmured Peloni, as he took it.

Noah started and looked at him keenly. But his flush of anger faded before Peloni's innocent eyes. "No, no," he explained; "for the opening ceremony of the foundation of Ararat."

Peloni's black eyes shone.

"There will be a great crush and only ticketholders can be admitted into the church."

"Into the church!" echoed Peloni, paling.

"Yes," said the Judge of Israel impressively, as he stood before a glass to adjust the graceful folds of his crimson robe. "Our fellow-citizens in Buffalo have been good enough to lend us the Episcopal Church for the ceremony."

"What ceremony?" he faltered, as horrid images swept before him, and he heard all the way from Frankfort the taunting cry of "Missionary!"

"The laying of the foundation-stone of Ararat."

"Laying the foundation-stone in a church!" Peloni was puzzled.

"Ah," said the Major, misunderstanding him; "it seems strange to you, nursed in the musty lap of Europe. But here in this land of freedom and this century of enlightenment all men are brothers."

"But surely the foundation-stone should be laid on Grand Island."

"It would have been desirable. But so many will wish to be present at this great celebration. Buffalo alone has some thirteen hundred inhabitants. How should we get them across? There are scarcely any boats to be had —and Ararat is twelve miles away. No, no, it is better to hold our ceremony in Buffalo. It is, after all, only a symbolism. The corner-stone is already being inscribed in Hebrew and English. 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our

God. Ararat, a City of Refuge for the Jews, founded by Mordecai M. Noah in the month Tishri, corresponding with September, 1825, in the fiftieth year of American Independence.' "

The sonorous recitation by the *Shophet* in his crimson and ermine robe somewhat restored Peloni's equanimity.

"But when will the actual city be begun?" he asked.

The *Shophet* waved his hand airily. "A matter of days."

"But are you sure we can build there?"

"Look at the map. Here is Grand Island—ours! Here is the site of Ararat. It is all as plain as a pikestaff. And, talking of pikestaffs, it would not be a bad idea to plant a staff on Ararat with the flag of Israel."

Peloni took fire: "Yes, yes, let me go and plant it. I'll journey night and day."

"You shall plant it," said the *Shophet* graciously. "Yes, I'll have the flag made at once. The property man at the Park Theatre will attend to it for me. The Lion of Judah and seven stars."

"It shall be waving on Grand Island before you open the celebration in Buffalo."

Peloni went out like a lion, his head in the seven stars. Could it be possible that to him—Peloni—had fallen the privilege of proclaiming the New Jerusalem!

IV

After the bustle of New York, the scattered village of Buffalo was restful but somewhat chilling to the Ghetto-bred poet, with his quick brain, unaccustomed to the slow processes of nature. Buffalo—with its muddy, unpaved streets, and great trees, up which squirrel and chip-

munk ran—was still half in and half out of mother earth; man's artifice ruled in the high street with its stores and inns, some of which were even of brick; but in the byways every now and then a primitive log cabin broke the line of frame cottages, and in the outskirts cows and pigs walked about unconcernedly. It was a reminder of all that would have to be done in Ararat ere a temple could shine, like a lighthouse of righteousness to the tossing nations. But when Peloni learned that it was only twelve years since the scarcely born village had been burnt down by the British and Indians in the war, he felt reëncouraged, warming himself at the flame, so to speak. And when he found that the citizens were all agog about Ararat and the church celebration—that it divided interest with the Erie Canal, the hanging of the three Thayers, and the recent reception of General Lafayette at the Eagle Tavern—his heart expanded in a new poem.

It was indeed an auspicious moment for Noah's scheme. All eyes were turned on the coming celebration of the opening of the great canal, to be the terminus of which Buffalo had fought victoriously against Black Rock. Golden visions of the future gleamed almost tangibly; and amid the general magnificence Noah's ornate dream took on equal solidity. Endless capital would be directed into the neighborhood of Buffalo—for Ararat was only twelve miles away. Besides, all the great men of Buffalo —and there were many—had been honored with elaborate cards of invitation to the grand ceremony of the foundation-stone. A few old Baptist farmers were surly about the threatened vast Jewish immigration, but the majority proclaimed with righteous warmth that the glorious American Constitution welcomed all creeds, and that there was money in it.

Peloni looked about for a Jew to guide him, but could find none. Finally a Seneca Indian from the camp just below Buffalo undertook to look for the spot. It was with a strange thrill that Peloni's eyes rested for the first time on a red Indian. Was this indeed a long-lost brother of his? He cried "Shalom Aleikhem" in Hebrew, but the Indian, despite Noah's theories, did not seem to understand. Ultimately the dialogue was carried on in the few words of broken English which the Indian had picked up from the trappers, and in the gesture-language, in which, with his genius for all languages, Peloni was soon at home. And in truth he did find at heart some subtle sympathy with this copper-colored savage which was not called out by the busy citizens of Buffalo. On a sun-lit morning, bearing his flagstaff with the flag wrapped round it, a blanket, and a little store of provisions for camping out over-night, Peloni slipped into the birch canoe and the Indian paddled off. For miles they glided in silence along the sparkling Niagara, lone denizens of a lonely world.

Suddenly Peloni thought of the *Judengasse* of Frankfort, and for a moment it seemed to him that he must be dreaming. What! a few short months ago he was selling prayer-books and phylacteries in the shadow of the old high-gabled houses, and now, in a virgin district of the New World, in company with a half-naked red Indian, he was going to plant the flag of Judah on an island forest and to found the New Jerusalem. What would they say, his old friends, if they could see him now? And he—the *Possemacher*—what winged jest would he let fly? A perception of the monstrous fantasy of the thing stole on poor Peloni. Was he, perhaps, dreaming after all? No, there was the Niagara River, the village of Black Rock on his right hand, and on the other side of the

gorge the lively Fort Erie and the poplar-fringed Canadian shore, and there too—on the map Noah had given him—Ararat lay waiting.

The Indian paddled imperturbably, throwing back the sparkling water with a soft, soothing sound. Peloni lapsed into more pleasurable reflections. How beautiful was this great free place of sun and wind, of water and forest, after the noisome Jew-street! He was not dreaming, nor—thank God!—was Noah. Strange, indeed, that thus should deliverance for Israel be wrought; yet what was Israel's history but a series of miracles? And his—Peloni's—humble hand was to plant the flag that had lain folded and inglorious these twenty centuries!

They glided by a couple of little islands, duly marked on the map, and then a great, wooded, dark purple mass rose to meet them with a band of deep orange on the low coast-line.

It was Grand Island.

Peloni whispered a prayer.

Obeying the map marked by Noah, the canoe glided round the island, keeping to the American side. As they shot past a third little island, a dull booming began to be audible.

"What is that?" Peloni's face inquired.

The Indian smiled. "Not go many miles farther," he indicated. "The Rapids soon. Then—whizz! Then big jump! Niagara. Dead."

Fortunately Ararat was due much sooner than Niagara. As they drew near the fourth of the little islands, which lay betwixt Grand Island and the mainland of the States, and saw the Tonawanda Creek emptying itself into the river, Peloni signed to the Indian to land; for it was here that Ararat was to arise.

The landing was easy, the river here being shallow and the bank low. The beauty of the spot, as it lay wild and fresh from God's hand in the golden sunlight, moved Peloni to tears. The Indian, who seemed curious as to his movements and willing to share his mid-day meal, tied his canoe to a basswood tree and followed the standard-bearer. There was a glorious medley of leafy life—elm, oak, maple, linden, pine, wild cherry, wild plum—which Peloni could only rejoice in without differentiating it by names; and as the oddly assorted couple walked through the sun-dappled glades they startled a world of scurrying animal life—snipe and plover and partridges and singing-birds, squirrels and rabbits and even deer, that frisked and fluttered unprescient of the New Jerusalem that menaced their immemorial inheritance. The joy of city-building had begun at last to dawn on Peloni, the immense pleasure to the human will of beginning afresh, of shaking off the pressure of the ages, of inscribing free ideas on the plastic universe. As he wandered at random in search of a suitable spot on which to plant the flagstaff, the romance of this great American world thrilled him, of this vast continent won acre by acre from nature and the savage, covering itself with splendid cities; a retrospective sympathy with the citizens of Buffalo and their coming canal warmed his breast.

Of a sudden he heard a screaming, and looking up he observed two strange, huge birds upon a blasted pine.

"Eagles," said the laconic Indian.

"Eagles!" And Peloni's heart leaped with a remembrance of Noah's words. "Here under their wings shall our flag be unfurled. And that blasted tree is Israel, that shall flourish again."

He dug the pole into the earth. A breeze caught the flag, and the folds flew out, and the Lion of Judah and the seven stars flapped in the face of an inattentive universe. Peloni intoned the Hebrew benediction, closing his eyes in pious ecstasy. "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, who hast kept us alive, and preserved us, and enabled us to reach this day!"

As he opened his eyes, he perceived in the distance high in air, rising far above the Island, a great mist of shining spray, amid which rainbows netted and tangled themselves in ineffable dream-like loveliness. At the same instant his ear caught—over the boom of the rapids—the first hint of another, a mightier, a more majestic roar.

"Niagara," murmured the Indian.

But Peloni's eyes were fixed on the celestial vision.

"The *Shechinah!*" he whispered. "The divine presence that rested on the Tabernacle, and on Solomon's Temple, and that has returned at last—to Ararat."

V

The booming of cannon from the Court House, and from the Terrace facing the lake, saluted the bright September dawn and reminded the citizens of Buffalo that the Messianic day was here. But they needed no reminding. The great folk had laid out their best clothes; military insignia and Masonic regalia had been furbished up. Troops guarded St. Paul's Church and kept off the swarming crowd.

The first act of the great historic drama—"Mordecai Manuel Noah; or, The Redemption of Israel"—passed off triumphantly, to the music of patriotic American airs. The procession, which marched at eleven from the Lodge through the chief streets, did honor to this marshaller of stage pageants.

ORDER OF PROCESSION

Grand Marshal, Col. Potter, on horseback.
Music.
Military.
Citizens.
Civil Officers.
State Officers in Uniform.
President and Trustees of the Corporation.
Tyler.
Stewards.
Entered Apprentices.
Fellow Crafts.
Master Masons.
Senior and Junior Deacons.
Secretary and Treasurer.
Senior and Junior Wardens.
Master of Lodge.
Past Masters.
Rev. Clergy.
Stewards, with corn, wine, and oil.

Globe	Principal Architect, with square, level, and plumb.	Globe

Bible.
Square and Compass, borne by a Master Mason.
The Judge of Israel
In black, wearing the judicial robes of crimson silk, trimmed with ermine, and a richly embossed golden medal suspended from the neck.
A Master Mason.
Royal Arch Masons.
Knights Templars.

At the church door there was a halt. The troops parted to right and left, the pageant passed through

into the crowded church, gay with the summer dresses of the ladies, the band played the grand march from "Judas Maccabæus," the organ pealed out the "Jubilate." On the communion-table lay the corner-stone of Ararat!

The morning service was read by the Rev. Mr. Searle in full canonicals; the choir sang "Before Jehovah's Awful Throne"; then came a special prayer for Ararat, and passages from Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and the Psalms, charged with divine promises and consolations for the long suffering of Israel, idyllic pictures of the Messianic future, symbolized by the silver cups with wine, corn, and oil, that lay on the corner-stone. At last arose, with that crimson silk robe trimmed with ermine thrown over his stately black attire, and with the richly embossed golden medal hanging from his neck—the Master of the Show, the Dramatist of the Real, the Humorist without a sense of Humor, the Dreamer of the Ghetto and American Man of Action, the Governor and Judge of Israel, the *Shophet*,—in brief Mordecai Manuel Noah. He delivered a great discourse on the history of Israel and its present reorganization, which filled more than five columns of the newspapers, and was heard with solemn attention by the crowded Christian audience. Save a few Indians and his own secretary, not a single Jew was present to hold in check the orator's oriental imagination. Then the glittering procession filed back to the Lodge, and the brethren and the military dined joyously at the Eagle Tavern, and Noah's wit and humor returned for the after-dinner speech. He withdrew early in order to write a full account of the proceedings for the *Buffalo Patriot Extra*.

A salvo of twenty-four guns rounded off the great day of Israel's restoration.

VI

Meantime Peloni on his island awaited the coming of its Ruler. He heard faintly the cannonade that preceded and concluded the laying of the foundation-stone in the chancel of the church, and he expected Noah the next day at the latest. But the next day passed, and no Noah. Peloni fed on the remains of his corn and drank from the river, but though his Indian guide was gone and he was a prisoner, he had no fear of starvation, because he saw the wigwams of another Indian encampment across the river and occasionally a party of them would glide past in a large canoe. Despite hunger, his sensations on this first day were delicious. The poet in him responded rapturously to the appeal of all this new life; to feel the brotherhood of wild creatures, to sleep under the stars in the vast night, to watch the silent, passionate beauty of the sunrise, ripening to the music of the birds.

On the second day his eyes were gladdened by the oncoming of a boat rowed by two whites. They proved to be a stone mason and his man, and they bore provisions, a letter, and newspapers from Noah:—

"My dear Peloni:

"A hurried line to report a glorious success, thank Heaven! A finer day and more general satisfaction has not been known on any similar occasion. All the dignity and talent of the neighborhood for miles were present. I hear that a vast concourse also assembled at Tonawanda, expecting that the ceremonies would be at Grand Island, but that many of them came up in carriages in time to hear my Inaugural Speech. You will see that the newspapers, especially the *Buffalo Patriot Extra,* have reported me fully, showing how they realize the importance of this world-stirring episode in Israel's history. Their comments, too, are for the most part

highly sympathetic. Of course the *New York Herald* will sneer; but then Bennett was once in my employ on the *Courier and Enquirer*. They tell me that you duly set out to plant the flag of Judah, and I assume it is now by God's grace waving over Ararat. Heaven bless you! my heart is too full for words. I had hoped to find time to-day to behold the sublime spectacle myself, but urgent legal business calls me back to New York. But I am resolved to start the city without delay, and the bearers of this have my plan for a little monument of brick and wood with the simple inscription—'Ararat founded by Mordecai Manuel Noah, 1825'—from the summit of which the flag can wave. I leave you to superintend the same, and take any measures you please to promote the growth of the city and to receive, as my representative, the inflowing immigrants from the Ghettos of the world. I appoint you, moreover, Keeper of the Records. To you shall be given to write the new Book of the Chronicles of Israel. My friend Mr. Smith, one of the proprietors of the island, will communicate with you on behalf of the Shareholders, as occasion arises. Expect me shortly (perhaps with my bride, for I am entering into holy wedlock with the most amiable and beautiful of her sex) and meantime receive my blessing.

"Mordecai Manuel Noah, Judge of Israel,
"per A. B. Seixas, Secr. *pro tem.*"

While the little monument was building, and the men were coming to and fro in boats, Peloni made friends with the Indians, the smoke-wreaths of whose lodges hovered across the river, and he picked up a little of their language. Also he explored his island, drawn by the crescendo roar of Niagara. It was at Burnt Island Bay that he had his first, if distant, view of the Falls themselves. The rapids, gurgling and plunging with foam and swirl and eddy, quickened his blood, but the cataracts disap-

pointed him, after that rainbow glimpse of the upper spray, and it was not till he got himself landed on the Canadian shore and saw the monstrous rush of the vast tameless flood toward the great leap that he felt the presence and the power that were to be with him for the rest of his days. The bend of the Horse-Shoe was hidden by a white spray mountain that rose above its topmost waters, as they hurled themselves from green solidity to creamy mist. And as he looked, lo! the enchanting rainbows twinkled again, and he had a sense as of the smile of God, of the love of that awful, unfathomable Being, eternally persistent, while the generations rise and fall like vaporous spray.

The tide was low and, drawn by an irresistible fascination, he adventured down among the rocks near the foot of the Fall. But a tingling storm of spray smote him half blind and wholly breathless, and all he could see was a monstrous misty Brocken-spirit upreared and in his ears were a thousand thunders. A wild elemental passion swelled and lifted him. Yes, Force, Force, was the secret of things, the vast primal energies that set the stars shining and the seas roaring. Force, Life, Strength, that was what Israel needed. It had grown anæmic, slouching along its airless *Judengassen*. Oh, to fight, to fight, like the warriors who went out against the Greeks, who defended the Holy City against the Romans. "For the Lord is a Man of War." And he shouted the cry of David, "Blessed be the Lord, my Rock, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." But he stopped, smitten by an ironic memory. This very blessing was uttered every Sabbath twilight, in every Ghetto, by every bloodless worshipper, to a melancholy despairing melody, in the lightless dusk of the synagogues.

The monument was speedily erected and, being hollow,

proved useful for Peloni to sleep in, as the October nights grew chilly. And thus Peloni lived, a latter-day Crusoe. He had now procured fishing-tackle, and grew dexterous in luring black bass and perch and whitefish from the river. Also he had found out what berries he might eat. Occasionally a boat would sell him cornmeal from Buffalo, but his savings were melting away and he preferred to forage for himself, relishing the wild flavor of uncivilized living. He even wished it were possible to eat the birds or the rabbits he could have killed: but as various points of Jewish law forbade such diet, there was no use in buying a musket or a bow and arrows. So his relations with the animal world remained purely amicable. The robins and bluebirds and thrushes sang for him. The woodpeckers tapped on his monument to wake him in the morning. The blue jays screamed without wrath, and the partridges drummed unmartially. The squirrels frolicked with him, and the rabbits lost their shyness. One would have said these were the Lost Ten Tribes he had found.

Peloni had become, not the Keeper of the Records, but the Keeper of Noah's Ark.

VII

So winter came, and there was still nothing to record, save the witchery of the muffled white world with its blue shadows and fantastic ice friezes and stalactites. Great icicles glittered on the rocks, showing all the hues beneath. Peloni, wrapped in his blanket, crouched in his monument over a log that burnt in an improvised grate. It was very lonely. He had heard from no one, neither from Noah, nor Smith, nor any Jewish or even Indian pilgrim to the New Jerusalem, and the stock of winter

provisions had exhausted his little hoard of coin. The old despair began to twine round him like some serpent of ice. As he listened in such moods to the distant thunder of Niagara—which waxed louder as the air grew heavier, till it quite dominated the ever present rumble of the rapids—the sound took on endless meanings to his feverish brain. Now it was no longer the voice of the Eternal Being, it was the endless plaint of Israel beseeching the deaf heaven, the roar of prayer from some measureless synagogue; now it was the raucous voice of persecution, the dull bestial roar of malicious multitudes; and again it was the voice of the whole earth, groaning and travailing. And the horror of it was that it would not stop. It dropped on his brain, this falling water, as on the prisoner's in the mediæval torture chamber. Could no one stop this turning wheel of the world, jar it grindingly to a standstill?

Spring wore slowly round again. The icicles melted, the friezes dripped away, the fantastic mufflers slipped from the trees, and the young buds peeped out and the young birds sang. The river flowed uncurdled, the cataracts fell unclogged.

In Peloni's breast alone the ice did not melt: no new sap stirred in his veins. The very rainbows on the leaping mist were now only reminders of the Biblical promise that the world would go on forever; forever the wheel would turn, and Israel wander homeless.

And at last one sunny day a boat arrived with a message from the Master! Alas! even Noah had abandoned Ararat. "I am beginning to see," he wrote, "that our only hope is Palestine. Zion alone has magnetism for the Jew. The great war against Gog prophesied in Ezekiel will be in Palestine. Gog is Russia, and the Russians are the descendants of the joint colony of Meshech and Tubal

and the little horn of Daniel. Russia in an attempt to wrest India and Turkey from the English and the Turks will make the Holy Land the theatre of a terrible conflict. But yet in the end in Jerusalem shall we reërect Solomon's Temple. The ports of the Mediterranean will be again open to the busy hum of commerce; the fields will again bear the fruitful harvest, and Christian and Jew will together, on Mount Zion, raise their voices in praise of Him whose covenant with Abraham was to endure forever, in whose seed all the nations of the earth are to be blessed. This is our destiny."

Peloni wandered automatically to the apex of the island at Burnt Ship Bay, and stood gazing meaninglessly at the fragments of the sunken ships. Before him raced the rapids, frenziedly anxious for the great leap. Even so, he thought, had Noah and he dreamed Israel would haste to Ararat. And Niagara maintained its mocking roar—its roar of gigantic laughter.

Reërect Solomon's Temple in Palestine! A ruined country to regenerate a ruined people! A land belonging to the Turks, centre of the fanaticisms of three religions and countless sects! A soil which even to Noah was the destined theatre of world-shaking war!

As he lifted his swimming eyes he saw to his astonishment that he was no longer alone. A tall majestic figure stood gazing at him: a grave, sorrowful Indian, feathered and tufted, habited only in buckskin leggings, and girdled by a belt of wampum. A musket in his hand showed he had been hunting, and a canoe Peloni now saw tethered to the bank indicated he was going back to his lodge. Peloni knew from his talks with the Tonawanda Indians opposite Ararat that this was Red Jacket, the famous chief of the Iroquois, the ancient lords of the soil. Peloni tendered the salute due to the royalty stamped

on the man. Red Jacket ceremoniously acknowledged the obeisance. Then they gazed silently at each other, the puny, stooping scholar from the German Ghetto, and the stalwart, kingly savage.

"Tell me," said Red Jacket imperiously, "what nation are you that build a monument but never a city like the other white men, nor even a camp like my people?"

"Great Chief," replied Peloni in his best Iroquois, "we are a people that build for others."

"I would ye would build for my people then. For these white men sweep us back, farther, farther, till there is nothing but"—and he made an eloquent gesture, implying the sweep into the river, into the jaws of the hurrying rapids. "Yet, methinks, I heard of a plan of your people—of a great pow-wow of your chiefs in a church, of a great city to be born here."

"It is dead before birth," said Peloni.

"Strange," mused Red Jacket. "Scarce twenty summers ago Joseph Elliott came here to plan out his city on a soil that was not his, and lo! this Buffalo rises already mighty and menacing. To-morrow it will be at my wigwam door—and we"—another gesture, hopeless, yet full of regal dignity, rounded off the sentence.

And in that instant it was borne in upon Peloni that they were indeed brothers: the Jew who stood for the world that could not be born again, and the Red Indian who stood for the world that must pass away. Yes, they were both doomed. Israel had been too bent and broken by the long dispersion and the long persecution: the sprig was snapped; he could not recover. He had been too long the pliant protégé of kings and popes: he had prayed too many centuries in too many countries for the simultaneous welfare of too many governments, to be capable of realizing that government of his own for which

he likewise prayed. This pious patience—this rejection of the burden on to the shoulders of Messiah and Miracle—was it more than the veil of unconscious impotence? Ah, better sweep oneself away than endure the long ignominy. And Niagara laughed on.

"May I have the privilege of crossing in your canoe?" he asked.

"You are not afraid?" said Red Jacket. "The rapids are dangerous here."

Afraid! Peloni's inward laughter seemed to himself to match Niagara's.

When he got to the mainland, he made straight for the Fall. He was on the American side, and he paused on the sward, on the very brink of the tameless cataract, that had for immemorial ages been driving itself backward by eating away its own rock. His fascinated eyes watched the curious smooth, purring slide of the vast mass of green water over the sharp edges, unending, unresting, the eternal revolution of a maddening, imperturbable wheel. O that blind wheel, turning, turning, while the generations waxed and waned, one succeeding the other without haste or rest or possibility of pause: creatures of meaningless majesty, shadows of shadows, dreaming of love and justice, and fading into the kindred mist, while this solid green cataract roared and raced through æons innumerable, stable as the stars, thundering in majestic meaninglessness. And suddenly he threw himself into its remorseless whirl and was sucked down into the monstrous chaos of seething waters and whirled and hurled amid the rocks, battered and shapeless, but still holding Noah's letter in his convulsively clinched hand, while the rainbowed spray leapt impassively heavenward.

The corner-stone of Ararat lies in the rooms of the

Buffalo Historical Society, and no one who copies the inscription dreams that it is the gravestone of Peloni.

And while the very monument has mouldered away in Ararat, Buffalo sits throned amid her waters, the Queen City of the Empire State, with the world's commerce at her feet. And from their palaces of Medina sandstone the Christian railroad kings go out to sail in their luxurious yachts,—vessels not of bulrushes but driven by steam, as predicted by Mordecai Manuel Noah, Governor and Judge of Israel.

Israel Zangwill

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